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AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE, and GENUINE LAWS OF POETRY;

INCLUDING

A particular DEFENCE of the WRITINGS, and GENIUS of Mr. POPE.

BY

PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.

— On ſait qu'il n'eſt point de Vérité iſolée; que toute Idée nouvelle tient à quelques Idées déja connues, avec leſquelles elle a, neceſſairement, quelques Reſſemblances. C'eſt, cependant, de ces Reſſemblances que part l'Envie, pour accuſer journellement de plagiat les Hommes illuſtres, nos contemporains.

Helvetius. De L'Eſprit.

LONDON,
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MDCCLXXVIII.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD GEORGE GERMAINE.

MY LORD,

MY veneration of the memory of a great Poet, and my high opinion of your literary talents, and acquirements, have prevailed with me to take the liberty of dedicating

 the

the following Eſſay to your Lordſhip. The entertaining, inſtructive, and ſublime Genius, whoſe works are the principal ſubject of theſe pages;—who is admired by Europe, at leaſt as much as any modern Poet, was well known, and properly eſteemed by the late Duke of Dorſet, your worthy Father. Your anceſtors, my Lord, have, much to their honour, been long famous for a particular attention to poetical merit. Therefore to this humble, but ingenuous tribute, from the Authour

of

of a Defence of the Writings, and Genius of Mr. Pope, you have a Title both perſonal, and preſcriptive.

Theſe are the motives which dictated this Addreſs to your Lordſhip:—not my gratitude, as an Engliſhman, for the progreſs, or rather continuation, of our unconſtitutional, ſanguinary and deſtructive continental war, over which *you* preſide; not very auſpiciouſly to your political reputation.—I pay this homage to the polite ſcholar, and to the orator;—not a particle

ticle of my reſpect is intended for the Miniſter.

I am, MY LORD,

your Lordſhip's

moſt obedient,

humble Servant,

PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.

Lleweny,
Oct. 10, 1777.

AN

AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE and GENUINE LAWS OF POETRY.

WHILE I paſſed ſome weeks of the laſt ſummer with a friend in the country, I read, in his library, a Book entitled, *An Eſſay on the Writings, and Genius of Pope.* It's Authour, whoſe taſte is vitiated, and whoſe head is confuſed with too much

learning, treats our celebrated poet with great irreverence, and injuſtice. In reading that book, I was not ſeduced by poetical ſophiſtry, nor by an oſtentatious diſplay of erudition. After I had peruſed it, I thought for myſelf on the ſubject; and ſome obſervations on Poetry, which then aroſe in my mind, I now offer to the publick; not in the peremptory tone of an Ariſtotelian critick, but with the deference of a gentleman.

It is ſomewhat ſurprizing, that, in an age of taſte, and refinement, your men of mere erudition, your mechanical critics, have preſumed to publiſh their illiberal, and ſtupid

remarks

remarks on this great and beautiful poet. That the ſyſtems of Newton and Locke are, already, in many parts, diſputed, oppoſed, and rejected, are not extraordinary changes in the republick of knowledge; becauſe the abilities of thoſe great men were exerted on objects which will ever be controvertible; on the primary laws of matter, and of mind, which act in the remote and deep receſſes of nature. But that Pope ſhould be attacked openly, and in form, by envy, or by thoſe who aſſume conſequence from mere learning and ſingularity, after his glory had been thoroughly eſtabliſhed by

the admiration of his countrymen, and before luxury, and venality had uſhered into England another age of barbariſm, are circumſtances rather new, and capricious, in the poſthumous fate of an illuſtrious poet. One would have thought that *his* fame would have been permanent, and ſacred; for he acquired it not by metaphyſical ſubtleties, nor by deducing certain conſequences from uncertain principles; but by addreſſing the common ſenſe, the common perceptions, the common feelings; the ſtrong, and the noble ſentiments of mankind. Dr. Warton entitles his Book, "An Eſſay

"on

"on the Genius and Writings of "Pope:"—a prepoſterous title which correſponds with the abſurdity of the whole performance. For the genius of an Authour is diſcovered by his writings; the character of his writings is not inferred from his genius. Among his other ſcholaſtick dreams, he aſſerts, that to eſtimate the merit of any poet, we muſt diveſt his thoughts of meaſure, and rhyme, and read and weigh them in a proſaïc order; an aſſertion that ſhows how little He is acquainted with Poetry, either in judgement, or ſentiment. True, and complete poetical excellence reſults, not only from ex-

tenſive knowledge, and from a ſenti-
mental, vigorous, and ardent mind;
but likewiſe from a delicate ſagacity,
and accuracy; or, in other words,
from taſte, and elegance. Dr.
Warton ought to have conſidered,
that Poetry is *one*, and, by a long
interval, *the firſt* of the fine arts;
and therefore, that the fire of the
poet, if he would reach his aim,
if he would ſtrike irreſiſtably, and
with all his force, muſt be model-
led, and directed by deliberation,
and choice. Hence, while He is
heated with the warmth of inſpiration,
he is attentive to propriety, to order,
and embelliſhment; not only to the
moſt

moſt pertinent ſelection of words, but likewiſe to their poſition; to the ſtrength, and harmony which are produced by their judicious, and fortunate arrangement. For theſe are indiſputable and powerful conſtituents of Poetry. A particle may be ſo placed in a verſe, that the ſenſe of the Authour may be clear, and the idiom of our language may not be violated; yet even that particle, by a happy tranſpoſition, might acquire life, and energy, and give more animation, and luſtre to the line. In the productions of the fine arts, nothing is indifferent; the minuteſt parts have their great importance

and influence; they reflect proportion, and expreſſion on the other parts, from which *they* likewiſe draw thoſe advantages; and all the parts, as they are diſpoſed, and compacted by the artiſt, form a ſtriking whole. It is one of Dr. Warton's few juſt obſervations, that the late Dr. Hawkeſworth, hath, in many papers of his Adventurer, ſhown a ſtrong, and bright imagination, and invention; two eſſential poetical characteriſticks; and yet that he was but an indifferent poet. This obſervation ſhould have checked his mangling of our admired poet; it ſhould have been a hint for him to find

find that a certain ſeries, a certain riſe, and flow of ideas, and language; that compoſition, ſymmetry, and harmony are parts of Poetry as well as thought and ſentiment; and that, vigorous, and tranſporting are the effects of

— magic numbers, and perſwaſive ſound.

It is immutably in the nature of Poetry, through the ear to captivate the ſoul. If I am told that this airy property does it no great honour, I anſwer, that it hath pleaſed the Authour of our Being, that we ſhould be very ſtrongly, and very nobly moved by ſound; that all the various, and rapturous emo-

tions

tions which we receive from muſic are totally impreſſed by ſound; and that muſick is a fine, a ſublime art; though far inferiour to Poetry, in extent, in dignity, and in power.

I may now venture to aſſert, that if we deem Poetry, diſſolved, and emaſculated into proſe, a criterion of poetical merit, we may as well mutilate the ſtatue of a Phidias, and throw its fragments promiſcuouſly around us, that we may be ſtruck with the beauty of the work, and form a right judgement of the excellence of the artiſt. Or, to feel the muſick of one of Handel's Oratorios, and thence to eſtimate *his* genius, we

we may as well play all its notes, but not in *his* order, and combination.

" Take" [ſays Dr. Warton, in the ninth page of his Dedication] " ten " lines of the Iliad, Paradiſe Loſt, or " even of the Georgics of Virgil, and " ſee whether by any proceſs of cri- " tical chymiſtry, you can lower, and " reduce them to the tameneſs of " proſe. You will find that they will " appear like Ulyſſes in his Diſguiſe " of Rags; ſtill a Hero, though " lodged in the cottage of the Herdſ- " man Eumæus." This period is concluded with a pretty ſimile; but when we reaſon, and exemplify, we ſhould carefully diſtinguiſh between

ſimile,

ſimile, and fact. I ſhall here try Homer, and Milton by the poetical criterion which, with his uſual precipitance, he has adopted from Horace, and with which he ſeems to triumph over the admirers of Pope. Were I diſpoſed to quote diſingenuouſly; were I diſpoſed to accept this challenge in all it's latitude; I could give ſeveral paſſages from each of thoſe great poets, in a proſaïc order, by which, they would be ſo far from appearing heroes in diſguiſe, that we ſhould take them for mere goſſips, or drivellers. But the cauſe which I am pleading is too ſtrongly founded in nature to need the

the mean ſupport of illiberal advantage, and chicane. I ſhall cite the opening of the Iliad, and of the Paradiſe Loſt, without looking farther at preſent into either poet. As I am not ſo fond of Greek parade as my learned academician, I ſhall tranſlate the ten firſt lines of the Iliad into Engliſh; the tranſlation ſhall be faithful, and worthy of the original; allowance being made for the ſuperiour energy of the Greek language, and for the unnatural, and monſtrous transformation of Poetry into proſe.

" O Goddeſs, ſing the deſtructive
" animoſity of Achilles, the ſon of
" Peleus, which brought infinite
" woes

" woes on the Greeks; and ſent
" many brave ſouls of heroes pre-
" maturely to Pluto; and made them
" a prey to dogs, and all ravenous
" birds (But the will of Jove was
" fulfilled) from the time of the im-
" placable quarrel between Atrides,
" the King of Men, and the divine
" Achilles. And from whom of the
" Gods came the riſe of their diſpute?
" From the ſon of Jove and Latona:
" for he, provoked againſt the King,
" ſpred a fatal peſtilence through
" the army; and the people fell."
I have here given the ſenſe of Homer with ſufficient accuracy; nor are my expreſſions tame, and life-

leſs;

leſs; the paſſage is not flat as I have diſpoſed it; but ſurely the pleaſure it affords is far inferiour to poetical emotion. If I am told that a poet loſes conſiderably by a tranſlation, I anſwer that the obſervation generally holds true; that theſe lines of Homer are weakened in my verſion; not merely by being tranſlated, nor from the inability of the Engliſh language to equal the energy of the Greek; but becauſe in the ſtate to which they are, in that verſion, reduced, they are, in truth, not Poetry: they want the charms of Mr. Pope's tranſlation; they want his generous flow, which gains impulſe, and fire in every line

of

of it's progreſs, and bears along, the mind of the reader, in a courſe almoſt as accelerated, and pleaſurable as it's Authour's; they want his glowing diction, his characteriſtick epithets, and images, which correſpond with the genius, and ideas of Homer, and by which his genius and ideas are often invigorated, and beautified; they want his harmony of numbers, his ſpontaneous, pertinent, and forcible rhyme; for it muſt ever be my opinion (Dr. Warton will think me a man of a monkiſh taſte) that rhyme, whether it took it's origin from the college, or the convent, in the perfection to which

it

it was brought by this inimitable bard, whom He ſo weakly cenſures, and attempts to degrade, is a great improvement, and ornament to Engliſh Poetry.

Let the learned reader break the meaſure of the beginning of the Iliad in the Greek original; let him give the words different ſtations from thoſe they hold in Homer; let him read the lines in their primitive order, and in his tranpoſition, and compare the effects of each on his ear, and on his mind. Unleſs Melpomene has frowned on his birth, he will feel the one Poetry, and he will find the other Proſe: he will

feel more ſenſibly by the compariſon, the influence of Homer's arrangement; of poetical enunciation.

I ſhall now make my ſecond experiment of Horace's, and Dr. Warton's criterion of true Poetry, by tranſpoſing the metrical order of the ten firſt lines of the Paradiſe Loſt.

" Heavenly muſe! that didſt in-
" ſpire, on the ſacred top of Oreb or
" Sinai, that ſhepherd who firſt
" taught the choſen ſeed, how the
" Heavens, and Earth, in the begin-
" ning, roſe out of Chaos; ſing of
" the firſt diſobedience of man, and
" the fruit of that forbidden tree,
" whoſe mortal taſte brought, with

" the

" the loſs of Eden, death into the
" world, and all our woe; till one
" greater man reſtore us, and regain
" the bliſsful ſeat."

The idiom of our language hath not ſuffered me to diſtort ſome parts of this quotation from their meaſure: yet whether or no the force, and beauty which it received from the maſter of our epic ſtrain are not almoſt totally loſt in the form it now bears, I appeal, not to your mere ſcholars, your *Helluones Librorum*, who read Milton and Suetonius with equal compoſure; and retain the ſubſtance of whatever they read by dint of univerſal memory;—nor to

your whimſical, formal, and inflexible criticks; but to thoſe on whoſe imaginations the complete ſtyle of the muſe is warmly impreſſed, by the ſtructure, and ſpirit of Poetry, and by the ſuſceptibility of their own minds.

It may be objected to my application of theſe two paſſages from Homer, and Milton, that I have not fairly exemplified Horace's, and our Authour's poetical teſt; as the exordium of a judicious epic poet is always marked with ſimplicity. To this objection I reply, that I thought, the moſt ingenuous way to try this imaginary proof of true genius, was,

not

not to make a ſelection, but to take a few lines from each poet, as they firſt occurred; that the lines which I have quoted, though they are not eminently nervous, and ſublime, yet as they are invocations to the muſe of the heathen, and chriſtian poet, are adorned with luminous imagery; and that this objection cannot equitably be made by Dr. Warton: for my examples have more of the poetical tone, and complexion than the ſpecimen which he hath produced from the beginning of Mr. Pope's firſt Ethick Epiſtle; where metaphorical, and ſplendid verſe is incompatible with his objects; which

allow him not to riſe above the mere moraliſt, and the man of the world.

Timidity, and inconſiſtency are the general concomitants of every kind of guilt. Dr. Warton was intended by nature for a diligent, and reputable ſchoolmaſter, or for a faithful warden of a College; not for a poet, nor for a liberal, and ſpirited critick. His moderate abilities have been perverted by promiſcuous, and intemperate reading, by an undiſtinguiſhing, and ſervile admiration of the Ancients, and by an ignoble, and inordinate ambition of ſingularity, and extraordinary penetration. Bewildered in this literary

rary labyrinth, and intoxicated with this unhappy paſſion, he raſhly determines to blight the laurels of Pope, to humble exalted genius; to deaden univerſal fame; to correct the voice of nature. Yet He maintains the ungenerous conteſt with the incongruity, and ſelf-contradiction of one who deduces falſe inferences from falſe principles, and with the mental reſervation, and puſillanimity of one who feels that he is urging a wrong cauſe, and inſulting illuſtrious merit. The dignity, and irreſiſtable powers of our immortal poet often draw from him involuntary deference, and extorted ap-

plauſe. Will the reformer of our Engliſh taſte vouchſafe to anſwer me one queſtion? If Mr. Pope had been living when you blundered on your opinion of his Poetry, would you have dared to treat him with that freedom with which you have arraigned his departed genius? If you deign me an anſwer, and one that is true, you will anſwer me in the negative. If you had attacked his fame while it was in his power to inflict a proper puniſhment on offenders of *your* claſs, he would probably have gibbeted you in a couplet executive of poetical juſtice, where you would have ſwung, with the

the reſt of your Bœotian fraternity, in adamantine chains. If my queſtion brings you to a full ſenſe of your demerit, you will make a recantation of your critical treaſon, not to me, but to an enlightened publick, who admire, and venerate his memory; and you will never again write, nor ſpeak diſreſpectfully of one of our firſt poets, to whom you would have crouched, if he had been alive, and whoſe acquaintance, at leaſt from your literary vanity, and fear, you would have pronounced your greateſt honour.

I like not to expreſs myſelf in a manner very familiar to the writer whom

whom I am refuting; in flaming hyperbole, and rapture; though that indefinite, and extravagant ſpecies of condemnation, or eulogy, ſaves one the trouble of accurate thought, and diſtinction, and dazzles the unreflecting reader. But I believe I may, without preſumption, inſiſt, that if the trial of poetical excellence, recommended by Horace, and by Warton, was, in the eye of the true critick, a legal trial; the poet never exiſted who would ſuffer leſs by encountering this frozen ordeal than Pope. But why did not our ſevere judge bring him to the bar of this rigid ſentence, in all his vigour? why

why did he not give him a chance for his life? His arbitrary proceſs would have had, at leaſt, the appearance of equity, if He had tried its effect on one of the many admirable paſſages which he has quoted in his book, and which demonſtrate the futility of its whole tenour, inſtead of dragging to his Horatian rack the beginning of the epiſtle above-mentioned, in which the great exertion of our poet would have been incompatible with his ſubject, and in which He ſports in the eaſy ſtyle of epiſtolary familiarity. The pertinacious critick, to evince the mediocrity of Pope's Poetry; to reach

his

his hoſtile aim; to ſtab the poet in a vital part, ſhould have tried his experiment on a capital quotation. Many ſuch quotations He hath given us from the Rape of the Lock, which are completely beautiful; and many from the Eloïſa to Abelard, which are ſuperlatively great. If our prieſt, for inſtance, had condemned ſuch lines, to his barbarous purgatory, from the latter Poem, as thoſe in which Eloïſa paints, in the ſtrongeſt colours, the objects around her convent; and deſcribes, with almoſt unexampled animation, their effects on her mind, when her piety was abſorbed in her paſſion; I make

no

no doubt but a diſcerning reader, if he had not been informed of the metamorphoſis, would have thought it the ſentiments, and language of one endowed with a vigorous imagination. But in thoſe lines, thus tranſpoſed, the *poet* would not have been diſcovered; for they would have wanted the indiſpenſable characteriſticks of Poetry; they would have been ſpoiled of its beautiful ſymmetry; of its captivating graces; of its harmonious expreſſion. If He had exhibited ſuch a ſpecimen, he would not have been leſs abſurd; but He would have been more ingenuous: and if his poſtulatum was

founded

founded in truth, He would have unqueſtionably proved that Mr. Pope was not a poet. I ſhall here tranſcribe the lines to which I have now alluded; not as they might have been ſhortened, and ſtretched, diſlocated, and mutilated, by our literary Procruſtes; but in their own *form, and preſſure.* Many ſuch teſtimonies I could produce to warrant my zeal for Pope.

The darkſome pines that o'er yon rocks reclined,
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind;
The wandering ſtreams that ſhine between the hills;
The grots that echo to the tinkling rills;

The

The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;
No more theſe ſcenes my meditation aid,
Or lull to reſt the viſionary maid.
But o'er the twilight groves, and duſky caves,
Long-ſounding iles, and intermingled graves,
Black MELANCHOLY ſits, and round her throws
A death-like ſilence, and a dread repoſe:
Her gloomy preſence ſaddens all the ſcene;
Shades every flower, and darkens every green;
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horrour on the woods.

Eloïſa to Abelard, v. 154.

The active imagination of the ſuſceptible reader, on whom Pope's Epiſtle

Epiſtle from Eloïſa to Abelard hath had its full play, has precluded a minute encomium on this admirable quotation: it muſt have called forth all his ſenſibility to nature, to ſympathy, and to love.

Dr. Warton ſeems to expect that a poet ſhould be always highly poetical; an expectation, in which, if his judgement, and taſte were ſound, he would be as often diſappointed by Homer, and Milton as by any other poets. The genius of the poet cannot always; it ought not always to be kept on the ſtretch; eſpecially in a work of any length. He ſhould not continually be regaling

us

us with rich deſcription, inflaming us with moral ardour; thrilling us with the pathetick, or tranſporting us with the ſublime. Ardour and ſtrength ſhould, indeed, be the predominant characters of his Poem; but it ſhould ſometimes flow in a gentle, and a placid ſtrain: it will be enough if He ſometimes preſerves only his *lucid order*. The deſcent of the Muſe is abſolutely neceſſary, if we conſider the nature of the poet, and the nature of his readers; and if it was not neceſſary, it would be judicious. It is demanded by the flexures, and variety of a fertile ſubject; it gives a natural, and eaſy

air to her Poetry; it prevents us from being cloyed by her ſweets, or fatigued by her grandeur; it gives us a few moments to breathe from poetical enthuſiaſm.

I muſt make an apology to the ſhade of Horace, who recommends a proſaic inverſion of the order of Poetry, to prove whether or no it is eſſentially good. I love, I eſteem, I revere Horace; but I hope I can diſcern between Him, and Truth, when He deſerts the bright, and infallible Goddeſs. I admit of no pope either in the church, or in the republic of letters. Hardly any Authour has afforded me more moral,

and

and poetical pleaſure, than Horace. I give Him far more merit than is allowed Him by the faſtidious Warton. He was, in my humble opinion, a true gentleman, a moſt agreeble companion, a liberal ſcholar, and a great poet; a writer of ſo fine, and elaſtick a ſpirit, that He loſes more than any other poet by transfuſion. But Horace, like other men, had his prejudices; and they gained weight from an Authour of his importance; from having received his poetical ſanction. It is well-known that the Greeks were intellectual oracles to the Romans; that the poliſhed, and learned Athenians gave literary

laws to the conquerours of the world.

Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
Intulit agresti latio.——

HORACE.

But the Romans, who, in fact *, excelled the Greeks in compoſition, held the latter in too general admiration, after they themſelves had attained a maturity of knowledge, and perfection in writing: the Diſciples, to all the rules of their maſters, from education, and habit, payed too implicit a homage; like that of our degenerate Engliſh coxcombs to

* Even Polybius and Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus muſt bow to the GREAT ROMAN AUTHORS.

Bolingbroke on Hiſtory.

the

the contemptible manners, and fopperies of the French; or, I might add, like that of many of our literary coxcombs, who affect to admire the limited, and languid writers of France; and to pronounce them equal, nay ſuperiour to the original, and manly genius of England.

Horace had adopted from the Greek ſchool the following dramatick rule; and He preſcribes it in his Art of Poetry:

> Neu minor, neu ſit quintâ productior actu
> Fabula, quæ poſci vult, et ſpectata reponi.
> De Arte Poeticâ, v. 189.

But this rule could only have been derived from arbitrary example; and

it could only have acquired a durable eſtabliſhment from the tyranny of cuſtom. For ſhould the Drama take it's diſtinct parts from nature, and propriety, it would certainly be reformed into three acts; one, for a ſketch of the characters, and for the opening of the fable; another, for the action, and criſis of the plot; and a third, for it's evolution, and cataſtrophe. Yet our vaſſal to the Ancients, I make no doubt, would maintain that five acts are the legitimate diviſion of a play: and I doubt not but He would rivet his poſition by ſome ſhrewd, cabaliſtical argument.

To corroborate my reaſoning by a celebrated authority, and to explode the ſervile, and dogmatical rules, by which the range of genius hath been confined; I ſhall now turn Dr. Warton's weapons upon Himſelf; by quoting two paſſages which he hath inſerted in his book, from my admired, and reſpected friend, the Authour of the Rambler; who, like a man, like a rational, and free Being, "always thinks for himſelf," as this writer obſerves; and whoſe extenſive, and maſterly learning is chaſtiſed, and brightened by genuine taſte, and by a moſt acute, and comprehenſive judgement. And I would

adviſe our critick, when He finds that his page requires foreign aid, to be cautious of bringing Johnſon's to his aſſiſtance. It might prove a dangerous auxiliary; it might occaſion a compariſon, which, from the reader, might be juſt, and unavoidable; but which *He* might think partial, and invidious.

"It ought to be the firſt endea-
"vour of a writer (ſays the * Ram-
"bler) to diſtinguiſh nature from
"cuſtom, or that which is eſtabliſh-
"ed becauſe it is right, from that
"which is right only becauſe it is
"eſtabliſhed; that he may neither

* N° 156.

"violate

" violate eſſential principles by a
" deſire of novelty, nor debar Him-
" ſelf of the attainment of any beau-
" ties within his view, by a need-
" leſs fear of breaking any rules,
" where no literary dictator had au-
" thority to preſcribe."—The ſame Authour ſtrengthens this generous inſtruction, in another place, by the following ſpirited, and beautiful obſervation.

" Criticiſm, though dignified, from
" the earlieſt ages, by the labours of
" men eminent for knowledge, and
" ſagacity, and ſince the revival of
" polite literature, the favourite ſtudy
" of European ſcholars, has not yet

" attained

" attained the certainty, and ſtabi-
" lity of ſcience. The rules that
" have been hitherto received, are
" ſeldom drawn from any ſettled
" principle, or ſelf-evident poſtu-
" late; nor are adapted to the na-
" tural, and invariable conſtitution
" of things: but will be found,
" upon examination, to be the ar-
" bitrary edicts of dictators exalted
" by their own authority; who, out
" of many means by which the ſame
" end may be attained, ſelected thoſe
" which happened to occur to their
" own reflection; and then by an
" edict, which idleneſs, and timidity
" were willing to obey, prohibited

" any new experiments of wit, re-
" ſtrained fancy from the indulgence
" of her innate inclination to hazard,
" and adventure; and condemned
" all future flights of genius, to per-
" ſue the path of the Mæonian
" Eagle.

" The authority claimed by cri-
" ticks may be more juſtly oppoſed,
" as it is apparently derived from
" Them whom They endeavour to
" controul; for we are indebted for
" a very ſmall part of the rules of
" writing to the acuteneſs of Thoſe
" by whom they were delivered.
" The criticks have generally no
" other merit than that of having read

" the

" the works of great Authours with
" attention: They have obſerved the
" arrangement of their matter, and
" the graces of their expreſſion; and
" then expect honour, and rever-
" ence for precepts which They
" never could have invented: ſo that
" practice has introduced rules, rather
" than rules have directed practice.

" For this reaſon the laws of every
" ſpecies of writing have been ſet-
" tled by the ideas of Him by
" whom it was firſt raiſed to repu-
" tation; without much inquiry whe-
" ther his performances were not
" yet ſuſceptible of improvement.
" The excellencies, and the faults

" of

"of celebrated writers have been "equally recommended to poſte- "rity; and ſo far has blind rever- "ence prevailed, that the NUMBER "of their BOOKS has been thought "worthy of imitation."

Whether Dr. Warton's work, or this which I am now writing, is more authenticated by theſe noble ſtrains of original ſenſe, and manly eloquence, let a judicious, and impartial publick determine; after They have examined our different ſentiments, and opinions, on ſubjects of criticiſm.

Dr. Warton Himſelf can ſometimes give us critical obſervations

which are worthy of the Authour of the Rambler. With all his prejudices in favour of ancient authority, He allows (pag. 121.) "That the precepts of the "Art of Poeſy were poſterior to "practice; that the rules of the "Epopea were all drawn from the "Iliad, and the Odyſſey; and thoſe "of Tragedy, from the Œdipus of "Sophocles. A petulant rejection "(He adds) and an implicit vene-"ration of the rules of the ancient "criticks are equally deſtructive of "true taſte."

But in *my* humble opinion, ſo little is effected by ſcholaſtick education, and

and ſo much by nature, and our own generous cultivation of noble talents, that I think a poet may be illuſtrious in his divine art;—in his paſtoral numbers, He may ſoothe, and delight my fancy with the ſcenes, and pleaſures of rural life; the nymph of his imagination may charm me with the graces of her perſon, and tranſfix me with the lightning of her eye; in his Drama, He may arreſt every faculty of my ſoul; He may chill me with horrour againſt vice, and inflame me with the love of virtue; in his more important page of general, and ſublime inſtruction, He may call forth all my affections, to

my

my ſocial, and moral duties; he may inſpire me with a philoſophical contempt of ſublunary trifles, and raiſe me to immortality, and to God; and theſe energies of His mind He may arrange, and adorn—He may give perſpicuity, and beauty to his arguments, his ſentiments, and his images, by the FACUNDIA, and the LUCIDUS ORDO;—all theſe intereſting, and great objects, in *my* humble opinion, He may preſent; all theſe SPECIOSA MIRACULA He may work, without ever having read Ariſtotle, or Quintilian, or Warton; who, from his very ſtrange animadverſions on the Poetry of Pope, we

muſt

muſt own, is by far the boldeſt, and moſt original critick of the Three.

In Dr. Warton's Dedication to Dr. Young [page xth] we find the following curious paſſage, which I muſt not ſuffer to paſs unnoticed.—" The " ſublime, and the pathetick are the " two chief nerves of all genuine " poeſy. What is there tranſcen- " dently ſublime, or pathetick in " Pope? In his works there is, in- " deed, nihil inane, nihil arceſſitum; " —puro tamen fonti quam magno " flumini propior;—as the excellent " Quintilian remarks of Lyſias. *And* " *becauſe I am perhaps unwilling to* " *ſpeak out in plain Engliſh,* I will

" adopt the following paſſage of " Voltaire; which, in my opinion, " as exactly characterizes Pope, as it " does his model Boileau, for whom " it was originally deſigned.—INCA- " PABLE, PEUT-ETRE, DU SUBLIME " QUI ELEVE L'AME, ET DU SENTI- " MENT QUI L'ATTENDRIT; MAIS " FAIT POUR ECLAIRER CEUX A QUI " LA NATURE ACCORDA L'UN ET " L'AUTRE; LABORIEUX, SEVERE, " PRECIS, PUR, HARMONIEUX; IL " DEVINT, ENFIN, LE POETE DE LA " RAISON."

So you are unwilling to ſpeak out in plain Engliſh. Yet if you are convinced of the truth of what you

are

are going to advance (and if you are *not*, you ſhould not wantonly aſperſe an eſtabliſhed, and great reputation), this *willingneſs to wound, and this fear to ſtrike*, are rather unworthy of a *man*. But I have dragged you to the altar of my poetical Deity, and you *ſhall* ſpeak out; you ſhall confeſs, in plain Engliſh, before you die. I ſhall give a faithful tranſlation of the character of Boileau, which you have quoted from Voltaire; and I ſhall, ſo far follow your example as to write my tranſlation in capitals; to impreſs on the reader one of the juſteſt periods that have been written by a brilliant, but prejudiced,

and flimſy writer; and to brand the culprit who traduces Pope.

PERHAPS HE WAS INCAPABLE OF THE SUBLIME WHICH ELEVATES THE SOUL, AND OF THE PATHETICK BY WHICH IT IS MELTED. BUT HE WAS FORMED TO ENLIGHTEN THOSE ON WHOM NATURE HAD BESTOWED BOTH PROPERTIES. HIS LABOUR, HIS SEVERITY, HIS PURITY, HIS ACCURACY, AND HIS HARMONY, CONSTITUTED HIM THE POET OF REASON.

This analyſis of Boileau particularizes, and comprehends, at leaſt, all *his* poetical merit. But it enumerates only the loweſt of Mr. Pope's characteriſticks as a poet; the

ſtrength

ſtrength of his reaſoning faculty, and his inimitable harmony excepted. We have no true, and complete, that is, no great poet, in the French language. Many circumſtances, or rather many material, and inſuperable diſadvantages, preclude a Frenchman from excellence in Poetry. A ſameneſs of diſpoſition, and character; the arbitrary government of the nation; their frivolous, and mechanical manners (for they are a ſet of deſpicable apes of one another) and the unaſpiring genius of their language; prevent them from aſcending to the ſummit of Parnaſſus. The French language wants

variety, flexibility, and vigour; ſo abrupt is the ſtructure, and inflexion of it's words, that they cannot be mellowed, and united by the fire of the poet; they will move in too broken, and unequal a progreſs; they will not glide amicably into one another. The rhyme, too, of their couplet often conſiſts of it's meagre, it's lifeleſs terminations with the ſame letter. The French has not gradation, and tenderneſs enough to expreſs the pathetick; nor boldneſs, and energy, to reach the ſublime. It may ſpring, and wanton in the deſultory flight, and it may warble in the little muſick of the linnet; but in

vain

vain will it aſpire to the majeſty; to the ſounding pinion; to the liquid, and rapid courſe, and to the ſoaring heights of the eagle; a bird, emblematical of the Roman, and Engliſh Muſe, as well as of the thunder of Jove.

But the mediocrity of the French poets proceeds from a cauſe yet more determined, and inſurmountable; from the natural complexion of their minds; from the ſtamina of their ſouls. As the converſation, and compoſition of an individual are congenial with the preciſion, variety, and ſtrength of the images which are formed in his mind; ſo the lan-

guage of any people takes a ſpirit, and model, a volubility, and ſound, ſympathetick with the extent and force of the national underſtanding, and imagination. About the time of the revival of letters, a few great men aroſe in Italy, who invigorated their language with nerves, and inveſted it with beauty: but ſince *their* golden age, it has gradually degenerated; and is now become characteriſtick of the modern Italians; a cunning, ſuperſtitious, profligate, and puſillanimous race. The majeſtick, and ſonorous language of Spain is expreſſive of the gravity, and pomp of the Spaniards: the extreme

treme length of words, and the harſh colliſion of conſonants in the High Dutch, are hieroglyphical of the unwieldineſs, and phlegm of the Germanic body: the quick, and pert air; the incoheſive ſtructure; the terſeneſs, and petty graces of the French, announce a ſlippant, and ſuperficial people; not the admirers of a ſimple, and manly, but the dupes of a tinſel, and childiſh elegance. The Engliſh have infuſed into *their* language, the infinite variety of their tempers, and humours; the unequalled ſtrength, and expanſion of their intellect; the exuberance, and ardour of

their

their imagination; and, their LIBERTY.

The vehicle of our native language is inſeparable from our thoughts, reflections, and contemplations. We naturally, we neceſſarily think, recollect, and ſurvey the different objects around us, in our mother-tongue; with which our ideas have been incorporated ſince our minds were firſt open to their admittance. Hence the multiplicity of our ideas, their eſſence, propriety, force, and colour, muſt be parallel, commenſurate, and homogeneous with our language. And hence the thoughts of the French, without taking

taking their abilities into the queſtion, which are moderate, or at beſt, ingenious, cannot riſe to the genuine ſtandard of Poetry. They are debarred from being eminent poets, by the nature, and circumſcription of their language; as Rouſſeau hath demonſtrated that the ſame cauſes have baffled their efforts in muſick.

It is certain that phyſical cauſes operate very powerfully on the human mind; of whatever ſubſtance that principle is formed: and I make no doubt that climate has a reſtrictive, or dilating influence, in limiting, or enlarging the endowments of reaſon, and fancy. I believe

lieve that no education would enable a native of the Equator, or of Greenland to diſtinguiſh himſelf by his mental faculties. May I not then venture to ſuppoſe, that the Engliſh climate is of a temperature extremely favourable to freedom, and the Muſes; that as it neither enervates us with heat, nor deadens us with froſt; but gently, and propitiouſly inclining to the North, is both cold, and genial, both healthful, and various;—may I not venture to ſuppoſe, that as theſe are the peculiar properties of *our* climate, it powerfully cooperates with our political conſtitution, to invigorate, actuate, and ſublimate our ſouls;

ſouls; to enliven, and impell courage; to agitate, and exalt genius? I offer not this opinion as a theory in which I confide; I ſubmit it, with deference, to the inquiry, and judgement of others: I give it them, in part, but not altogether, as conjecture, and ſpeculation. I ſhould imitate the writer I am confuting, if I was fond of building caſtles in the air. And I here beg leave to enter my caveat againſt any ſuſpicion that I am a gloomy, and inhuman materialiſt; for without the ſublime, and ſalutary doctrine of the immateriality, and immortality of the ſoul, God cannot be juſtified, nor indigent,

gent, and perſecuted virtue, conſoled.

And I likewiſe here aſſure the candid, and well-informed, that though the compariſons I have made of England with other nations, and particularly with France, may have a ſtrong appearance of partiality to my native country, from which few, indeed, are totally exempt; yet I think I can conſcientiouſly aſſert that I was carefully on my guard againſt it's intruſion, and ſuffered it not to mix with the praiſe which I have beſtowed on the Engliſh language, and on Engliſh abilities. It was purely the reſult of my beſt knowledge,

ledge, and of my moſt accurate obſervation. There are leading, and general characteriſticks of mankind: there are paſſions; there is a ſpecies, and degree of ſenſe, and ſentiment; there are virtues, and vices, common to all countries, and ages. But our paſſions; our ſenſe, and feelings, our moral diſpoſitions, and habits, are variouſly conſtituted, and modelled; they are infinitely diverſified, as well as our perſons, and aſpects. And as one individual is very perceptibly diſtinguiſhed from any other, not only by his corporeal make, and features, but likewiſe by the compoſition of his immaterial ſubſtance,

and

and by ſome ſingularities in life, and conduct, which He hath appropriated to Himſelf; ſo the ſeveral communities of the world are palpably marked and diſcriminated by a national character, partly from the natural, and eſſential formation of their minds; partly from climate, religion, and policy; and partly from language, cuſtoms, and manners.

From captious, and malevolent criticiſm it is impoſſible for the moſt accurate, and beſt writer to be ſecured. But we make literary, and publick appeals to people whoſe learning is tempered with good ſenſe, and generoſity; and from Thoſe an

Authour may always expect every reaſonable indulgence. Where I ſaid that the abilities of the French were moderate, or at beſt ingenious, I thought it not neceſſary, in expreſs terms to limit the aſſertion; to anticipate the judgement, and ſagacity of the ingenuous reader; who would conclude that I excepted the illuſtrious Monteſquieu, and a few more of his countrymen. In all general remarks, a ſmall number of exceptions are ſuppoſed; but ſuch exceptions by no means weaken the validity, and ſcope of thoſe obſervations. If I harboured a blind, and univerſal partiality in favour of Eng-

land, I ſhould be ſeverely cenſured by my own reaſon, and ſentiments: for the narrow ſpirit of national prejudice is one of the many unmanly qualities for which I deſpiſe a Frenchman.

The genius, and acquirements of Boileau are juſtly, and accurately defined by Voltaire. To his definition I ſhall only add, that I defy Dr. Warton, or any other critick, to produce me ten lines in Boileau, that will be read with unaffected, and vigorous poetical emotion. But Pope's knowledge was liberal, and extenſive; his genius was penetrating, and ardent: and it was as rich,

exten-

extenſive, and various as his know-
edge. We can hardly read a paſ-
age in that inſtructive, elegant, and
armonious; in that ſpirited, pathe-
ick, and ſublime poet, without very
ively pleaſure, or very forcible rap-
ure. He no ſooner invokes his
Muſe than ſhe is perfectly propi-
ious to his invocation: he informs,
nd convinces; he exaſperates; he
oothes, and melts us; he elevates,
nd tranſports us, as the ſubject re-
uires. You ſay, He took Boileau
or his model; it is impoſſible that
our aſſertion can be true. He was
oo good a judge of Poetry him-
lf; and He muſt have been too

conſcious of his own powers, to have had recourſe to ſo cold, and mechanical an example. You may tell me, with equal propriety, that Ben Jonſon was the model of Dryden, or Sophocles, of Shakeſpeare. Pope is an Engliſh Pegaſus; adorned with ſplendid, and beautiful trappings; holding a bold, and animated career, and diſdaining the ground. Boileau is the firſt horſe of a waggon; diſtinguiſhed by ſome frugal, and common ornaments; a paſſive, laborious, and uſeful animal; pulling on in a ſlow, ſure, and ſteddy pace; and jingling his bells.

If your eſtimate of Mr. Pope's merit had been directed, and determined by taſte, and judgement, you would never have dragged Him down to a level with Boileau; whoſe works, indeed, you might have juſtly ranked with thoſe of Pitt, the tranſlator of Vida's Art of Poetry, and of the Eneïd; or with the Eſſay on Satire written by the late Dr. Brown, and prefixed by Warburton to the Moral Eſſays of Pope; or with the artificial, and luke-warm Poetry of Addiſon's Campaign.

You aſk what there is tranſcendently pathetick, and ſublime in Pope? One would think the man had

loſt his ſenſes. Many paſſages interſperſed throughout his works; his filial Apoſtrophes to the age, and infirmities of an affectionate mother; his Elegy to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady; his Prologue to Cato; his Eloïſa to Abelard, are all tranſcendently pathetick. I believe it will be allowed that if any ſubject is, in it's nature, a ground-work for the pathetick, it is love: and I imagine it will be likewiſe granted that the Epiſtle from Eloïſa to Abelard, is the warmeſt, the moſt affecting, and admirable amorous Poem in the world. Now, pray, Sir, muſt not the ſoul of that writer have been

peculiarly

peculiarly formed for the pathetick, who could inſpire with all the force, and varieties of the paſſion, with it's ardour, and ecſtacies; with it's anxieties, diſtreſſes, and excruciating torments, every verſe of a poem which conſiſts of almoſt four hundred lines? and after you had been converſant with that poem; after you had examined it's compoſition; (ſhall I not pay you a compliment which you do not deſerve, if I add) after you had felt it's fire?—and after you had quoted ſome of it's very ſtriking parts; how could you have the abſurdity, or the aſſurance to aſk, what there is tranſcendently pathetick in Pope?

It may be objected by you, as it has been objected by other cavillers, that Mr. Pope, in this poem, is much indebted to Eloïſa's Letters, for ſentiment, for deſcription, and energy. I deny the charge. By far the greater part of his Epiſtle to Abelard; it's fineſt, and it's nobleſt paſſages, are totally the productions of his own genius. She gives Him, indeed, a few good hints; and as they are applied, enlarged, and embelliſhed by the poet, they deſerve not a ſtronger, and more extenſive name. The ſtem of his generous, and luxurious thought, is, in two or three places, tranſplanted from the garden of Eloïſa:

Eloïſa: but on that ſtem Pope has ingrafted all it's beauty, and glory; it's diffuſive, and romantick branches; the bright verdure of it's foliage; the orient hues, and aromatick fragrance of it's bloſſoms. His appoſite uſe of a ſhort combination of ideas which another Authour had formed; the augmentation, and luſtre with which it was heightened, and adorned by Him, and the nervous, and genial ſtrains that flowed entirely from his own ſource, prove that He never adopted any ſentiment from a poverty of imagination.

Many reſpectable names have been raſhly, and confidently accuſed of

plagiariſm

plagiariſm by ignorance, and pedantry. I wiſh I had ſufficient abilities, and importance to condemn this injudicious, and malignant clamour to a perpetual ſilence, by drawing a clear, and deciſive diſtinction between the mean, and thieviſh plagiariſt, and the writer who avails Himſelf of his knowledge, by it's warrantable, and liberal application. The Plagiariſt is a creature of a ſordid ſpirit; of low capacity, and attainments; and yet He entertains a prepoſterous paſſion to be a conſpicuous Authour. He may have read many books, and He may have a cold, and retentive memory.

Hence

Hence the only effect of his crude, and undigeſted reading, is, to remember. And if we merely retain what we read, if it produces not more active, and fruitful conſequences, it would have been as well if the contents of the Authours we have peruſed had not been copied from the library into the mind. The ſtudies of the man whom I am endeavouring to delineate, are not examined, illuſtrated, and improved by any rational comment of his own; they do not coaleſce, they do not incorporate with the little proceſs of his own thoughts; they give riſe neither to new reflexions, nor to new imagery.

imagery. Thus when He adventures to write, and when He pretends to be very fine, He ſteals a ſeries of ideas from ſome celebrated Authour; and He tags them to his own feeble efforts, without any regard to place, or modification. He gives them not a richer dreſs; he ſets them not in a more advantageous light; they are not, from *his* pen, an improvement; they are not an imitation: they are almoſt a tranſcription; and they are an abſolute piracy. The unhappy Authour looks like a Mrs. Heidelberg, tricked out for a city-ball; whoſe ill-choſen and ill-diſpoſed ornaments only invite attention to the vulgarity

vulgarity of her taſte, and to the awkwardneſs of her manner. The ſplendid theft of our poetaſter is obtruded in too improper a place, and is too diſſimilar from the bad company into which it is brought, not to diſcover the cheat: it ſtands prominent, and glaring from his flat, and inanimate page. Like Trappolin, in the Farce, he is not long ſupported by iniquity. His impudence, and his fictitious ducal Inſignia ſoon fail him; and he is driven off the publick ſtage, to his primitive obſcurity, and contempt.

But the true poetical genius is a Being of a different order. Penetration,

rtion, and inquiry, fervour, and excurſion, are his properties, and his pleaſures. He takes nothing upon truſt; He thinks for Himſelf: and He thinks acutely, comprehenſively, and accurately. Proportionable to his reaſoning faculty are his feelings. While common mortals are but ſlightly affected with the beautiful, and the great objects of ſenſe, and ſentiment, they find inſtantaneous admiſſion to the innermoſt receſſes of his plaſtick ſoul, and are blended with it's eſſence. He proſecutes his literary exertions, as well as the enterprizes of his Muſe, with his conſtitutional ardour: He mollifies,

and ſubdues the aſperities of learning; He incorporates, and harmonizes it with his own thoughts. He acquires from books, and from his converſe with the world, thoſe ideas, and that imagery, which are ſelected by judgement, and adopted by fancy; He confines them not to the dreary limbo of inactive remembrance; that confuſed receptacle, in dunces, of the Trivial, and the Severe, the Elegant, and the Grand. The juſt, and animated forms of the True, the Fair, and the Noble, expatiate, and wanton, and love to reſide in his bright, and congenial mind; where they completely reflect their originals.

originals. Hence, the knowledge He has gained from ſtudy, from obſervation, and from his intercourſe with ſociety, muſt be ſuch as will be moſt inſtructive, entertaining, and intereſting to himſelf, and to mankind. And hence, as He has been long impreſſed with a great variety of poetical objects, a thought that has been anticipated by another poet, with whom he is converſant, may mix with the effuſions of his own imagination; and He may be unconſcious of it's Authour. Nor will it be ſurprizing, if, in ſome inſtances, men of a ſimilar genius, naturally, and from their own mental

fund,

ſund, think, feel, and expreſs themſelves, in the ſame manner, on the ſame ſubjects *. In each caſe, an arrogant critick of enormous appetite, inſatiable of reading, and re-

* All that is left us is to recommend our productions by the imitation of the antients: and it will be found true, that in every age, the higheſt character for ſenſe and learning has been obtained by thoſe who have been moſt indebted to *them*. For to ſay truth, whatever is very good ſenſe, muſt have been common ſenſe in all times; and what we call Learning, is but the knowledge of the ſenſe of our predeceſſors. Therefore they who ſay our thoughts are not our own, becauſe they reſemble the antients, may as well ſay our faces are not our own, becauſe they are like our Fathers: And indeed it is very unreaſonable, that people ſhould expect us to be ſcholars, and yet be angry to find us ſo.

Pope's Preface to his Poems.

membering, will raſhly, and inſolently charge the later poet with plagiariſm, to make a parade of his erudition; to enjoy a puny triumph. When the writer whom I am deſcribing, takes a thought from his literary ſtore, He applies it with a modeſt reſerve to it's Authour's property; but He applies it without any fear. He is not anxious that the obligation ſhould be concealed. For He works it into his Poem, becauſe it is extremely pertinent, and will have a moſt happy effect where He inſerts it; and He is conſcious that it will receive conſiderable advantages from the fire, or the poliſh;

or

or from the fertility of his Muſe. He will breathe into it more ſpirit; or He will adorn it with more beauty; or He will extend it with a rich, and magnificent amplification. He is conſcious, too, that it will be evident from the whole compoſition, and from other proofs of his poetical powers, that He accepted not this little tranſient aid from a debility, or laſſitude of genius.

It was thus that Pope was entitled to borrow; and it is thus that He acquits Himſelf when He ſometimes borrows from an ancient, or a modern Authour. He always varies, or beautifies; He raiſes, or aggrandizes

grandizes his adopted ſentiment. He reſembles, in one ſtriking particular, the fooliſh Midas of poetical Fable: whatever common metal He touches, He converts it into gold. In general, He works his prodigies, his *ſpecioſa miracula*, by the native impulſe, and operation of his own genius. I may mount my climax higher, and yet not deface it with the pompous inſignificance, and falſehood of bombaſt; I may ſafely add that his *eye often rolls in a fine frenzy*; with the creative lightning of invention

Darteth from Heaven to Earth, from Earth
to Heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
THE FORMS OF THINGS UNKNOWN,
our Poet's Pen

Turns

Turns them to ſhape, and gives to airy
NOTHING
A local Habitation, and a Name.
Midſummer-night's Dream.

But if He ſometimes takes the ſuggeſtion of a preceding writer for his baſis; from that baſis, our poetical Archimedes, plays his machinery; and moves the world.

They, who to reſtrain poets from plagiariſm, would prohibit Them from a judicious, and moderate application of ſome ſtriking, and expreſſive ſentiments, which They recollect from books, and converſation; may, for the ſame reaſon, diſpute their indiſpenſable privilege to copy

from the ample, and inexhauſtible page of nature: they may as well forbid Them to paint the Roſe; to perſonify the Zephyr; to deſcribe the limpid, and meandering River; or the ſounding, and impetuous cataract. They may as well prohibit Them the uſe of ſenſation, and reflexion. They may as well inſiſt, that their Poetry ſhould be fraught with images which have no relation to material objects, or to the human paſſions, and conduct, and yet entertain mankind; that in the true poet, capacity, and knowledge, are the ſame endowments; archetypes, and reſemblances, the ſame things; that,

that, in ſhort, He makes a various, and intereſting world from non-entity. On ſuch a poet I doubt not but the moſt faſtidious hypercritick would confer the palm of originality, and invention; of which properties Dr. Warton's ideas are almoſt as confuſed, and contradictory as the impoſſible chimera whom I have now exhibited. And ſuch a poet, as the doctrine of innate ideas has been, long ago, exploded, would be infinitely more than a *Maker*, in the temperate ſignification of his Greek name; He would be an abſolute Creator, in our Doctor's violent conception, and language. For He

would make a univerſe out of nothing. He would rival the omnipotence of the Deity.

If Dr. Warton had been properly impreſſed with the truth of the following obſervation, which is made by Himſelf, He would not ſo often, and ſo raſhly, have accuſed Pope of plagiariſm.

" I am ſenſible of the difficulty of
" diſtinguiſhing reſemblances from
" theſts; and of what a late critick
" has urged, that a want of ſeeming
" originality ariſes, frequently, not
" from a barrenneſs, and timidity of
" genius, but from invincible ne-
" ceſſity, and the nature of things:
" that

" that the works of Thoſe who pro-
" feſs an art, whoſe eſſence is imita-
" tion, muſt needs be ſtamped with
" a cloſe reſemblance to each other,
" ſince the objects, material, or
" animate, extraneous, or internal,
" which they all imitate, lie equally
" open to the obſervation of all, and
" are perfectly ſimilar. Deſcriptions,
" therefore, which are faithful, and
" juſt, muſt be uniform, and alike;
" the firſt copies may, perhaps, be
" entitled to the praiſe of priority;
" but a ſucceeding one ought not
" certainly to be condemned for
" plagiariſm."

I can-

I cannot yet loſe ſight of the glorious Epiſtle from Eloïſa to Abelard. The records of Literature do not afford an inſtance of ſo vigorous, and continued a flame as that which we feel in this divine Poem; except the *New Eloïſa* of that aſtoniſhing Swiſs, who was forced, by the inhuman treatment He received from his puritanical, and corrupted countrymen, to do Them the indelible diſhonour of reſigning his privileges in their community. In Rouſſeau's Work, indeed, all the ardour of genius, in the higheſt degree; all the delicacy, and ſtrength of ſentiment; all the variety, and force of imagination,

and

and invention; all the beauties, the graces, and energy of compoſition, are preſerved, with unparalleled, and unremitting powers, through one hundred and ſixty-three Letters. But that work is written in proſe. And ſo extremely rare are great poetical talents; we enjoy a pleaſure ſo much more lively, and enthuſiaſtick from exquiſite numbers than from the moſt animated, and elegant proſe, and ſo much more captivating are their charms, that a mind, fired with poetical ambition, would with difficulty determine whether he would wiſh to have been the Authour of Rouſſeau's, or of Pope's Eloïſa.

I ſhall

I ſhall here obſerve, from the reſpect, and veneration I bear to the illuſtrious foreign writer whom I have now mentioned; to enable my readers to form juſter diſtinctions on objects of criticiſm; to conſole humble capacities, and to humble the pride of learning, and of genius; that the late Mr. Gray's opinion of the New Eloïſa betrayed a depravity of judgement approaching to inſanity. He deſpiſed this unequalled, and immortal novel; and He was in raptures with *Fingal*. He infinitely preferred a profuſe tautology of the moſt vulgar ſentiments; of the moſt bleak, and horrid images;—

He

He infinitely preferred the very froth of puerile declamation, to the juſteſt, and the nobleſt ſentiments; to the moſt varied, and luxuriant imagery; to the very nerves, and ſoul of eloquence; to the genuine ſubſtance, and ſplendour of compoſition. So dangerous, and fatal to reaſon, and to ſentiment, is natural caprice, a Taſte nauſeated by a long habitude to literary objects; and the intoxicating adulation of a few fawning academicians. The bottom of Lethe, to which Fingal is now conſigned; the univerſal, and eager attention which is given to the writings of Rouſſeau; the applauſe of Europe;

and his eſtabliſhed fame, are the ſacred, and unanſwerable vouchers for my admiration of that original, and capital genius. The ſame univerſal, and intimate acquaintance with the works of Pope; the ſame univerſal applauſe; the ſame fixed, and immortal fame, are the reſpectable, and incontrovertible warrants for my defence, for my idolatry of that great poet. Theſe vouchers, whoſe united ſuffrages are the voice of nature, the moſt paſſionate worſhipers of Mr. Gray's memory will be preſumptuous, if They contradict. Theſe vouchers even Dr. Warton himſelf will no longer oppoſe; if,

after

after his bold attack on Pope, He has that proportion of modeſty left, with which the confidence of the ſcholar ſhould be corrected, and the manners of the Gentleman, adorned.

The ſmall number, and ſize of the excellent productions with which Mr. Gray hath enriched our Engliſh Poetry, prove that his talents were checked by an unreaſonable, whimſical, and inſuperable difficulty of being ſatisfied with his own compoſitions; and by an unmanly timidity to appear, in the character of an Authour, before a generous publick, with whom the defects, and errours of a Poem will never occaſion any

material

material diſguſt, if in that Poem, the true poetical ſpirit is predominant. Theſe inferences are more evidently proved from thoſe premiſes, if we conſider that He paſſed the greater part of his life in a celebrated ſeat of the Muſes; that He was not diſſipated, and licentious, but collected, and ſtudious; and that his mind, was, therefore, not chilled, and embarraſſed by poverty; but free from that indigence, and thoſe anxieties, by which poetical genius is commonly depreſſed, and perſecuted; partly, from the miſconduct which is produced by ſtrong ſenſibility and paſſions; and partly, from fortune's inflexible,

inflexible, and ſtupid averſion to learning, and to wit. From his minute, ſuperſtitious, and falſe delicacy of taſte; from his timorous pride, in venturing forth as a writer; from the uncouth, and unaffecting ſubjects, and images, to which He frequently has recourſe; from the ſurprizing inequality, which, in his different productions, is very ſenſibly felt by every unprejudiced, and true critick; and from the labour with which moſt of his Poems are ſtiffly characterized; — from theſe principles I likewiſe conclude, that there was a languor, and effeminacy in his mental frame; that his Muſe

was often deaf to his invocation; that the current of his fancy was often weakened, contracted, and obſtructed, by ſome conſtitutional poverty, and froſt; and that his beſt compoſitions were the effects of a temporary, but fortunate ſunſhine, and warmth of ſoul, producing as happy a ſympathy with thoſe objects which were moſt correſpondent with his mind; more than of an eſſential, and permanent brightneſs, and ardour of genius. This obſervation will neither ſeem invidious, nor imaginary to Thoſe who reflect that the human mind, is, in different perſons, complicated, and diverſified to

an

an infinite variety; and that greater poets than Mr. Gray have their conſpicuous maſter-pieces; though they may not outſhine their other works with ſo preeminent a luſtre as the famous Elegy, written in a Country-church-yard, excells other Poems of the ſame Authour.

Peace be to the quietiſm of the undiſtinguiſhing, imitative, and ſervile admirers of any poet! And ſacred be every ſtriking, and immortal monument of departed, or of living genius! That Elegy does honour to the Engliſh nation; it is a highly finiſhed, a beautiful, a moſt admirable Poem. It will be read, and

celebrated as long as our language is underſtood, and as long as mankind retain the ſentiments of humanity. In his Progreſs of Poetry He has caught the true ſpirit of the Ode; He has conducted it with judgement, enriched it with invention, and raiſed it to ſublimity. In the different encomiums which, in that Ode, He pays to our greateſt Engliſh poets, He juſtly, and nobly diſtinguiſhes, and characterizes their different, and peculiar merits. In his Ode on the Spring, in his Diſtant Proſpect of Eton-College, and in his Hymn to Adverſity, He has enforced the moſt uſeful, and important

tant

tant moral truths with remarkable elegance, and ſtrength of imagination. But his juſtly admired Elegy excells all his other pieces, by that artful, and elegant eaſe, by that *curioſa felicitas*, which is *apparently* ſpontaneous, and which is the perfection of writing. Here, with regret, I muſt limit my ingenuous, and ardent praiſe of this poet. In his Ode, entitled, The Bard, his Muſe often deviates from the poetical tract, and perſues her courſe with unequal wing. He prefixes the following Advertiſement to his Progreſs of Poetry and the Ode on which I am now hazarding ſome remarks:

" When the Authour firſt publiſhed " this, and the following Ode, He " was adviſed, even by his friends, " to ſubjoin ſome few explanatory " Notes; but had too much reſpect " for the underſtanding of his readers " to take that liberty."—Inſtead of *reſpect for the underſtanding of his readers*, He ſhould have ſaid, *reſpect for their knowledge*, or *information*. If the reaſoning, and ſentiments of a Poem are at all obſcure, it's Authour has defeated the aim of Poetry, which is, immediately to affect the mind. It deſerves not to be read. But if the ſubject of a Poem is obſcure, or not generally known, or

not

not intereſting, and if it abounds with alluſions, and facts of this improper, and unintereſting character, the writer who chuſes that ſubject, and introduces thoſe improper, and unaffecting alluſions, and facts, betrays a great want of poetical judgement, and taſte. Mr. Gray had a vitiated fondneſs for ſuch inſipid fable, narrative, and references. I cannot find that his Progreſs of Poetry wanted one explanatory Note, for the information, even of ſuperficial readers. The ſubject of the Bard is a fine foundation for his Ode, which, in many places, is very vigorous, and pictureſque But

it's Prophecy is too circumſtantially hiſtorical; it recites a long ſeries of paſſages from our Annals, which are either forgotten, or not regarded by many who are far from being illiterate. Here, as a conſiderable number of explanatory Notes is, conſequently, neceſſary, the flow, and warmth of the reader's mind, while He accompanies the poet, is checked, and broken, whenever He is obliged to conſult the Anecdotes at the bottom of the page: and after this interruption, He recovers not, even with the aſſiſtance of the Notes, that ardour which a well-written Poem ſhould not only inſpire, but maintain.

tain. The works of the greateſt, and leaſt exceptionable poets who lived two or three thouſand years ago, muſt, undoubtedly, be illuſtrated with many Notes; for they muſt often refer to Hiſtory which time hath veiled; to laws, and cuſtoms which He hath long aboliſhed; and to perſons, whoſe names, had it not been for the power of ſong, would have followed Them to oblivion. Yet when thoſe Authours flouriſhed, perhaps all theſe objects were obvious, and popular. The modern poet, therefore, if his Fable is not entirely his own, ſhould found his work on a fact from Hiſtory

which

which is important, ſtriking, and conſequently, well-known; or on a moral ſubject of equal dignity; or on a light, and gay Theme; which, however, may be ſo ſpirited, and coloured as to give a lively impulſe to ſentiment, and fancy; and ſo eſſentially detached from local, and tranſitory mode, ſo applicable to univerſal taſte, or paſſion, as to invite the attention of all civilized countries, and ages.

With the main object of the judicious poet, the collateral parts of his Poem will be conſiſtent. The names which He celebrates will be ſelected from the Regiſter of Fame: or he will give equal dignity to his own fictitious

fictitious names: for the touch of a poet's pen confers immortality. The facts which he conciſely, and forcibly relates, or to which He pertinently alludes; and the incidents, and images with which He embelliſhes his piece, will be ſuch as muſt ever afford a moſt lively ſympathy, and pleaſure to ſenſible, and cultivated minds. The Works of the moſt ardent, and judicious poets principally want illuſtration, where we meet with the names of ſome of their cotemporaries, whom they have *damned to everlaſting fame*, or whom they have embalmed with their encomium. But thoſe poets are, univerſally,

verſally, and will be, perpetually admired, not only becauſe they poſſeſſed great force of genius; but likewiſe from their exertion of that genius on ſubjects worthy of their numbers; on characters renowned for ſplendid virtues, or crimes; on the pleaſing, or majeſtick objects of nature; on elegant, or tender, or heroïc ſentiment; on important, and eternal truth.

Mr. Gray, in his Ode for the Inſtallation of the Duke of Grafton, as Chancellour to the Univerſity of Cambridge, deviates more than in his Bard, from the province of the poet, by his alluſions to many facts

in

in our Hiſtory, which make but a feeble impreſſion on minds endowed with poetical ardour; and can only be familiar to thoſe who poſſeſs a retentive, but a cold, and undiſtinguiſhing memory. To enumerate the other faults of this Ode; to analyze it by a particular animadverſion, would be ungenerous to departed merit. Let the liberal critick recollect that while it was compoſed by Gray, He payed the tribute of obligation, and gratitude. Let us compaſſionate the genius who found it his indiſpenſable duty to ſtoop to an ignoble homage, on the exemption from which, He congratulates

lates the ſhades of his humble ſwains: let us compaſſionate the man of delicate honour who ONCE *heaped the ſhrine of luxury, and pride, with incenſe kindled at the Muſe's flame*—who ONCE praiſed a Duke of Grafton.

I obſerve, with regret, that this polite ſcholar, this true genius; after he has given proofs of his excellence in Poetry; whether miſled by a whimſical, and extravagant taſte, or palled with the luxuriance of claſſical ground; often deſerts the elegant, and ſublime objects of Greece, and Italy, and England; and chuſes for the themes, and

ornaments

ornaments of his Muſe, the dreary heaths, the howling caves; the warp and woof, and vile webs of the North. A prepoſterous love of theſe diſguſting, and ſqualid ſubjects is, indeed, conſiſtent with the critical judgement which admired *Macpherſon*, and deſpiſed *Rouſſeau*. To this vitiated mental appetite, which is as coarſe as it is ſqueamiſh, there is a ſenſual analogy. We often ſee veterans in epicureiſm refuſe every delicacy of a magnificent table; and feaſt on ſome exotick, but harſh novelty, which would be extremely unpalatable to a laborious peaſant;—ſome fortunate,

and

and noble effort of culinary invention!

The Poems of Mr. Gray which exhibit theſe polar images, are ſuitable to their ſubjects. Their ſimplicity is vulgar; their elevation is bombaſt.

His *Long Story* is what long ſtories are in general, dry, and deſpicable. That Mr. Gray ſhould have authorized the publication of that confuſed, and tedious Poem, in the ſplendid edition of his beſt pieces, with Bentley's Deſigns, is a ſurprizing Phænomenon in the literary world, and a very ſingular proof that an Authour is unqualified to

judge

judge of his own productions. The Quarto-Edition of Gray's Works, which was publiſhed by Mr. Maſon ſoon after his death, might be another object of learned ſpeculation, if ſelfiſhneſs and vanity were uncommon faults; and if high-treaſon to friendſhip was an uncommon crime. If there is on earth a ſacred obligation, it is the moral precept which commands us with a voice more authoritative than that of Law, to revere, with a moſt delicate Religion, in language, and in conduct, the memory of a departed Friend. Mr. Maſon well knew that Gray could not bear the thought of ſuffer-

ing his likeneſs to go abroad. Unfortunately, however, for the poet's face, it was exactly remembered by Mr. Maſon, and Mr. Wilſon, who, in the uſe They made of that remembrance, gave an eminent proof of their affection for the dead. To *Them* we are indebted for a print of our Authour; by which the extravagant price of his works was probably given with leſs reluctance; but from which we certainly form no pleaſing idea of the original. Were our poet now to riſe from the grave, with what indignation would He learn, that his image had been ſtolen, in the ſecure hours of ſociety, and confidence,

confidence, by two men who called Themſelves his Friends;—that after his death, it was by *Them* communicated to the artiſt, and ſacrilegiouſly publiſhed, and ſold; and that by one of Them the refuſe of his mind was obtruded on the notice of the world; the careleſs, and trifling Letters which He had written to the pedantic, and imitative ſophs of his univerſity! I have now two culprits in my eye, who are not comprehended in our criminal Laws; to whom the world has been too indulgent, becauſe They have gratified it's idle curioſity; and who, therefore, ſhould be puniſhed with a poe-

tical proſcription; who ſhould not be ſuffered to *walk the world, in credit, to their grave.* The culprits are, Mr. William Mason, and Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope.

Mr. Maſon had one clear, and cogent reaſon for publiſhing that Volume of unequal, and promiſcuous Contents;—his own conſequence as an Authour. For his Friend, in the Text, and Himſelf, in the Comment, are ſufficiently induſtrious to perſwade the publick that He is a great poet. All the truly ſenſible, and judicious readers, who have looked into *your* pages, Mr. Maſon, muſt have ſeen their vanity, and their

ſervility.

ſervility. You have been deceived into a high opinion of your poetical talents, by your own ſelf-love; by Mr. Gray's partiality for an old acquaintance (I will not call you his *Friend)* by the temporary power of the preſs to give dignity to trifles; by the miſerable arts of theatrical managers to procure popularity for a tinſel Play;—and by the crouds that frequent our theatres, not becauſe a piece is intereſting in it's fable, various, and ſtriking in it's characters; affecting in it's ſentiments; and noble in it's language;—but becauſe it is in ſhort-lived faſhion. The diſtinguiſhing, and

ingenuous few, whoſe opinions of men, and books, reſult from ardent ſentiment, and independent reaſon, will tell you, that your verſes are not admired by one of your cotemporaries, whoſe praiſe ought to agitate ambition; that they are of a quaint, and languid, and periſhable conſtitution; that they will ſoon ſink, on the ſtream of time; that they will be totally unknown to poſterity.

Mr. Gray undervalued, or affected to undervalue, the poetical abilities of Dr. Akenſide. He thinks that mediocrity is his general characteriſtick; that He is often obſcure; but that He ſometimes is excellent; particularly

particularly in deſcription. Mr. Maſon obſerves, in a Note to the Letter which contains theſe remarks, that Mr. Gray's opinion of *The Pleaſures of Imagination*, and the Doctor's, muſt have been the ſame; becauſe He had intended to publiſh that Poem on a more extenſive, and accurate plan; as is evident from the poſthumous Edition of his Works. In this obſervation I cannot find common ſenſe. Can we reaſonably conclude that an Authour thinks but indifferently of the merit of his own Poem, becauſe He intends to republiſh it with conſiderable alterations, and additions?

I admire merit as much as I diſlike impertinence, and preſumption. Akenſide was a great poet. It muſt be owned that in his Pleaſures of Imagination He is frequently too philoſophical, and ſcientifick: But the faults of that immortal Poem are loſt in the brightneſs of it's tender, and maſculine beauties. Horace Himſelf might have been proud to have been the Authour of his Odes. They are characterized with eaſe, with eloquence; and with all the enthuſiaſm of the poet. His untimely death was an irreparable loſs to ſociety, and to every Friend of the Muſes. By the contemptible, but

but too deciſive echos of arbitrary fame; by the envy of mankind; and by a ſtrange fatality in ſublunary things, this illuſtrious poet holds not the rank which He deſerves, in the publick eye. May it hereafter be remembered that He hath written a far greater number of excellent Odes than Gray!—As for that Maſon; that puerile Floriſt; that *Engliſh*, or rather, *Scotch Gardener*; *He* would have been highly honoured if He had been Akenſide's Amanuenſis.

If the liberty which I have taken with Gray, ſhould offend his admirers, I beg leave to aſſure Them, that *I*,

too am a warm admirer of the capital productions of that great poet; and that I took this liberty, by no means to indulge an envious temper; but to emancipate poetical criticiſm from all prejudice, and to aſſert it's free juriſdiction. And I farther beg leave to inform Them, that *Nature*, the *Legiſlatrix of the* DEITY, not Cambridge, is *my* ALMA MATER.

If it be objected, that by thus inveſtigating Mr. Gray's Title to Immortality, I have wandered in a digreſſion unconnected with my main objects; I reply, that by impartially examining the merit of the different productions of a celebrated genius, which

which have been too haſtily, and indiſcriminately admired, I think I have rather illuſtrated, than forgotten, the ſubject of my Treatiſe; that by endeavouring to aſſign to each of thoſe productions it's reſpective rank in the poetick ſcale, we improve in a juſt, and diſtinguiſhing taſte; in the accuracy of poetical criticiſm; and we, conſequently, gain a more perſpicuous, and comprehenſive knowledge of the conſtituents of Poetry. After finding, too, that, of the little which was written by Gray, but a ſmall part is excellent, we are taught more properly to eſteem, more highly to admire, and revere, Pope;

who wrote many poems, which, after a very few exceptions, are, all, elegant, and beautiful, and great.

Dr. Warton aſks, in the tenth page of his Dedication, *what there is tranſcendently ſublime in Pope?*— An illiterate, and impertinent coxcomb; a French Abbé, ironically aſked a gentleman, whom He heard profuſe of encomium on a country which has been admired, and praiſed by a Monteſquieu, and a Helvetius, *what there was remarkably great in England?* But I ſhall give a direct anſwer to the Doctor's queſtion.

Pope's Univerſal Prayer is tranſcendently ſublime. His Prologue to

the

the Tragedy of Cato is tranſcendently ſublime. So are many parts of his Eſſay on Man. In his Addreſs to Lord Bolingbroke, at the concluſion of that excellent Poem, He diſplays, as Dr. Warburton juſtly obſerves, all the characteriſticks, and ornaments which Longinus gives to the ſublime, in a ſpirit, in a ſymmetry, and in a language, perhaps unequalled by man. Sir, a ſummer's day would elapſe before we could read all that is tranſcendently ſublime in Pope.

He was endowed with ſo feeling, ſo elegant, and ardent a ſoul; He was ſo eminently, ſo peculiarly qualified by

nature

nature to animate, and adorn any object which He intended to exhibit with all the graces, that if He had only favoured the world with his Tranſlation of the Iliad, it would have ranked Him with our great, and celebrated poets. If we except the ſimplicity of the Greek bard; if we except the natural harmony, and energy of the Greek language; every reader who is truly learned; every manly ſcholar, whoſe mind is free from prejudice, and fraught with ſentiment, muſt allow, that Pope, in general, * excells his original,

in

* Lorſque la reputation d'un homme, ou d'un ouvrage eſt établie, nous les louons ſouvent ſans les eſtimer. Nous n'avons pas

pour

in propriety, in beauty, and in fire. He *perſued the path of the Mæonian Eagle*, with a vigorous wing, and with an undazzled eye. Emboldened by the flight of his daring *Maſter*, and emulous of his glory, He roſe to heights, in the Æther of Parnaſſus, unexplored even by *Him*. In ſhort,

HE IMPROVED ON HOMER.

pour eux une eſtime ſentie, mais une eſtime ſur parole. Telle eſt l'eſtime générale pour Homére, que tout le monde loue, et qui n'eſt lû que des gens de Lettres. "When the reputation of a man, or a book is "once eſtabliſhed, we praiſe the one or the "other without hefitation.—But we are often "the mere echoes of their praiſe: we *feel* not "our eſteem of them; it is only adopted. "Such is the univerſal veneration for the me-"mory of Homer. He is admired by All: "but He is only read by men of Letters." The excellent Authour of the Life of Helvetius.

There perhaps never was a poet who ſoftened, and mellowed ſuch delicacy, and refinement, ſuch dignity, and ſtrength, with ſo liberal, and polite an eaſe as Pope. But ſuch Poetry will not be admired by criticks of a vitiated, and inſatiable taſte. In a moſt happy ſelection of thoſe ideas, and images which give a lively, and forcible pleaſure to human nature; in their new, and beautiful connexion; in the ſpontaneous, but ſtrong language of the heart, and paſſions, in which thoſe ideas, and images are conveyed, *They* ſee nothing great; nothing above mediocrity. Their Gothick

ſouls

ſouls are only ſtimulated with the *tranſcendently* ſublime; or, in other words, with the unnatural, the gigantick, and the incoherent. Are you ambitious of eulogium from ſuch readers? If you can only aſtoniſh Them, They will immediately pronounce you ſublime. In ſentiment, give them all the extravagance, and madneſs of ill-imagined paſſion. In painting, let all your figures be groteſque; let all your colouring be Chineſe. Give Them a huddle, and a craſh of objects; the gardens of Sir William Chambers;—the very Advertiſements of a Langford;—the very Poetry of the Wartons.

Dr. Warton is of opinion (page 278th of his Eſſay) that if Mr. Pope had written an Epic Poem, He was "ſo DIDACTIC A GENIUS, that He "would have been deficient in that "ſublime, and pathetick, which are "the main nerves of the Epopèa."

I do not pretend, Dr. Warton, nor am I ambitious, to be ſo profound a Grecian as you; but I think I know the meaning of the word, *Didactick*. In it's primary, and ſimple application, it ſignifies, *Inſtructive*. But you know that by long, and eſtabliſhed uſe (quem penes arbitrium eſt, et jus, et norma loquendi) this Greek word, which has been adopted into

into the Engliſh language, has a limited and particular ſignification. It is an epithet which we give to a Poem, that, with order, and perſpicuity; with the mildeſt charms of verſe, inculcates the rules we are to obſerve in acquiring, or practiſing an art, or ſcience. The Didactick is, conſequently a ſpecies of Poetry which, in general, admits not adventurous excurſion; generous enthuſiaſm; the bolder flights of the Muſe. I muſt here obſerve, that an art or ſcience of a ſecondary, or of a diſtinct, and circumſcribed order, is a ſubject for a didactick poet. He who chuſes, and adequately diſplays a theme, in

which our conduct, and our paſſions are univerſally, and momentouſly intereſted, is a poet of a ſuperiour claſs. Agreeably to this diviſion of poetical territory, Lucretius is not a didactick poet; for his ſubject is, The Nature of the Univerſe;—Juvenal is not a didactick poet; for his province is, A general Enforcement of Virtue; and a general Hoſtility againſt Vice:—Horace is profeſſedly a didactick poet, in his Art of Poetry; but not in any other part of his works:—Virgil is a didactick poet in his Georgicks; but not in his Æneid:—Armſtrong is a didactick poet in his Art of preſerving

ſerving Health:—but Akenſide is not a didactick poet: for *He* ranges through an extenſive, and luxuriant field; The Pleaſures of Imagination.

I hope I ſhall be excuſed for this minute, and ſcholaſtick definition of a word. I remember, Mr. Locke told me, many years ago, that if diſputants would begin, by affixing clear ideas to their leading terms, many arguments would be prevented, or ſoon determined.

If then I have marked, with any accuracy, the ſphere of the *Didactick*, is our inimitable Tranſlator of Homer a didactick poet? Should we characterize *Him* by that humble

epithet, who left us many auguſt monuments of genius; and who wrote but one poem to which that epithet can be applied; his Eſſay on Criticiſm; and certainly, one of the nobleſt didactick poems in the world? Were didactick talents the predominant abilities in *Him* who ſhowed ſuch inventive powers in his beautiful Rape of the Lock;—who painted all the variety, and force of the paſſions, in ſuch animated forms, and in ſuch glowing colours? Is it not profane, to pronounce *Him* ſo didactick a poet, who unfolded, and enforced, all the relations, and duties of man; who in the ſtrain of ſo ſublime

ſublime a religion, connected the phyſical, and moral world, with the Supreme Being?—who *looked*, with ſo pervading, and rapturous an eye, *from Nature, up to Nature's God?*

More illuſtrious atchievements than didactick Poems are attributed to Mr. Pope by Voltaire. I ſhall quote the French verſes to which I refer: they very juſtly deſcribe the moral excellence of our great poet. Voltaire had mentioned Horace, and Boileau. He adds;

Vous y cherchiez le vrai; vous y goutiez
le Beau;
Quelques traits echappés, d'une utile morale,

Dans leurs piquants ecrits brillent par intervalle.
Mais POPE approfondit ce qu'ils ont effleuré;
D'un Eſprit plus hardi, d'un pas plus aſſuré,
Il porta le Flambeau dans l'Abime de l'Etre,
Et l'Homme avec lui ſeul apprit à ſe connoitre.
L'Art quelquefois frivole, et quelquefois divin,
L'Art des vers eſt, dans POPE, utile au Genre humain.

Voltaire;—Au Roi De Pruſſe.

This is a much higher praiſe than that which Voltaire gives to Boileau; and which *You*, Dr. Warton, who are an Engliſhman, and a ſcholar, and who pretend to be a critick, think equally characteriſtick of Pope.

Is

Is it not ſhameful that *you* ſhould endeavour to leſſen the merit of a moſt exalted genius; who did ſuch honour to his country, and to human nature; while He is deemed a poet of the firſt magnitude by a ſuperficial Frenchman, who is notorious for his national prejudices; who cannot poſſibly judge of Engliſh Poetry ſo well as a young Etonian; and who, amidſt his more profligate, and atrocious blaſphemies, impiouſly prated, in the ſame breath, about Shakeſpeare, and Corneille?

A little, undermining critick ſeldom attempts to degrade eſtabliſhed, and high reputation, without timi-

dity,

dity, heſitation, and inconſiſtency. The writer who tells us in one part of his book that Pope is rather a ſenſible, and elegant, than a vigorous, and great poet, in another place, throws a French veil over his preſumptuous opinion; and acknowledges that "He is unwilling to "ſpeak out in plain Engliſh:"—The writer who denies that Pope was maſter of the "Pathetic," and the "Sublime," calls Him, "our laſt "GREAT POET."—He, who with an unaccountable abſurdity, claſſes the abilities of Pope in the didactick degree, aſſerts that "his Prologue "to Cato is far ſuperiour to any

"of

" of the Prologues of Dryden; that " it is more lofty than any thing " in the Tragedy itſelf; that it is " what the ſubject required it to be, " ſolemn, and SUBLIME." He, who, with an extravagance, and futility of obſervation, that deſerve only a ſmile of contempt, would perſuade us, that " Pope's cloſe, and conſtant " reaſoning had impaired, and cruſh- " ed the faculty of imagination,"— yet ventures to declare, that the Rape of the Lock is a Poem which cannot be too much admired, and applauded;—that it abounds with fine invention; and that Pope, has, in *that* Poem, EXCELLED ANY THING

IN

IN SHAKESPEARE; OR PERHAPS, IN ANY OTHER AUTHOUR.

I ſhall now beg leave to quote ſome paſſages which are peculiarly ſtriking, from the works of Pope. I tranſcribe not theſe paſſages to enlarge the ſize of this Eſſay: but I think the review of them will be entertaining even to Thoſe who are moſt converſant with our admirable Poet:—and I hope they will contribute to evince his various excellence;—to ſatisfy Thoſe, on whoſe memory his Poetry is not ſo ſtrongly impreſſed, that my oppoſition to Warton has been a defence of nature, of ſentiment, and of truth; and that

that I have not been too laviſh of encomiums on a truly great genius, to the productions of whoſe Muſe, I owe my nobleſt pleaſures, and my beſt impreſſions.

It is difficult to ſelect from The Rape of the Lock a paſſage or two, ſuperiour to the general ſtrain of that Poem: it is all ſo beautiful. In the following lines, however, which make a part of the ſpeech of Ariel, in the Second Canto, to his Denizens of Air, the invention, and imagination of the poet, and his delicate humour, are eminently diſplayed.

Ye Sylphs, and Sylphids, to your Chief
give ear,
Fays, Fairies, Genii; Elves, and Dæmons,
hear!
Ye know the ſpheres, and various taſks
aſſigned,
By laws eternal, to the aërial kind.
Some in the fields of pureſt Æther play;
And baſk, and whiten in the blaze of day.
Some guide the courſe of wandering orbs
on high;
Or roll the planets through the boundleſs ſky.
Some, leſs refined, beneath the moon's pale
light,
Purſue the ſtars that ſhoot athwart the night;
Or ſuck the miſts in groſſer air below;
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow;
Or brew fierce tempeſts on the wintery main;
Or o'er the glebe diſtill the kindly rain.

Others

Others on earth o'er human race preſide;
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide;
Of theſe, the chief the care of nations own;
And guard with arms divine the Britiſh throne.
Our humbler province is to tend the fair;
Not a leſs pleaſing, though leſs glorious care;
To ſave the powder from too rude a gale;
Nor let the impriſoned eſſences exhale;
To draw freſh colours from the vernal flowers;
To ſteal from rainbows, ere they drop in ſhowers,
A brighter waſh; to curl their waving hairs;
Aſſiſt their bluſhes, and inſpire their airs.
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we beſtow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.

Rape of the Lock. Canto II. v. 73.

I ſhall now give the lines which cloſe this unrivalled Poem. They

are exquiſitely beautiful: they are characterized, like thoſe which I have now quoted, with elegance, and luxuriance of fancy; and with delicacy of humour. They diſarmed Warton of his Greek truncheon. They are (ſays He) at once, DULCE LOQUI, and RIDERE DECORUM. Belinda demanded her Lock in vain.—It could not be found. It occaſioned various conjectures.

Some thought it mounted to the lunar ſphere. The poet thus announces it's more exalted fate.

But truſt the Muſe—She ſaw it upward riſe,
Though marked by none but quick, poetick eyes.

So

(So Rome's great founder to the Heavens withdrew,
To Proculus alone confeſſed in view)
A ſudden ſtar it ſhot through liquid air;
And drew, behind, a radiant trail of hair.
Not Berenice's locks firſt roſe ſo bright,
The Heavens beſpangling with diſhevelled light.
The Sylphs behold it kindling, as it flies;
And pleaſed, perſue it's progreſs through the ſkies.
This the beau monde ſhall from the mall ſurvey,
And hail with muſick it's propitious ray.
This the bleſt lover ſhall for Venus take;
And ſend up vows from Roſamonda's lake.
This Partridge ſoon ſhall view in cloudleſs ſkies,
When next He looks through Galileo's eyes;
And hence the egregious wizard ſhall foredoom
The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

Then ceaſe, bright Nymph, to mourn thy
raviſhed hair,
Which adds new glory to the ſhining ſphere!
Not all the treſſes *that* fair Head can boaſt,
Shall draw ſuch envy as the lock you loſt.
For after all the murders of your eye;
When, after millions ſlain, yourſelf ſhall die;
When thoſe fair ſuns ſhall ſet, as ſet they muſt,
And all thoſe treſſes ſhall be laid in duſt;
This lock the Muſe ſhall conſecrate to Fame;
And 'midſt the ſtars inſcribe Belinda's name.

Rape of the Lock. Canto V. v. 123.

Let us next view Him, as a moral poet; a poet who was ardently engaged in the defence, and praiſe of virtue; and in whom vice found a moſt indignant, and formidable foe. In the following quotation, He throws out his independent, and

noble ſpirit; the poignancy of his Satire; and that conciſe, manly, and generous Eulogium on his Friends, in which we can hardly exemplify an equal to Pope. The perſon with whom He is holding a poetical dialogue, warns Him of the dangers to which He will be expoſed by his ſatirical publications. The poet replies:

What! armed for virtue, when I point the pen,
Brand the bold front of guilty, ſhameleſs men;
Daſh the proud gameſter in his gilded car;
Bare the mean heart that lurks beneath a ſtar;
Can there be wanting, to defend her cauſe,
Lights of the church, or guardians of the laws?

Could penſioned Boileau laſh, in honeſt
ſtrain,
Flatterers, and bigots, even in Louis' reign?
Could laureat Dryden, Pimp, and Friar
engage,
Yet neither Charles, nor James be in a rage?
And *I* not ſtrip the gilding off a knave,
Unplaced, unpenſioned, no man's heir, or
ſlave!
I will, or periſh in the generous cauſe;—
Hear this, and tremble, you who 'ſcape the
laws!
Yes, while I live, no rich, or noble knave,
Shall walk the world in credit to his grave.
To virtue only, and *her* friends, a friend,
The world beſide may murmur, or commend.
Know, all the diſtant din that world can keep,
Rolls o'er my grotto, and but ſoothes my ſleep.
There, my retreat the beſt companions grace,
Chiefs out of war, and ſtateſmen out of place.
There,

There, St. John mingles with the friendly bowl
The feaſt of reaſon, and the flow of ſoul.
And He, whoſe lightning pierced the Iberian lines,
Now forms my quincunx, and now ranks my vines;
Or tames the genius of the ſtubborn plain,
Almoſt as quickly as He conquered Spain.

Satire I. v. 105.

With the ſame ſpirit He deſcribes the force, and dignity of moral ridicule; and makes an apoſtrophe to ſome of it's objects.

O! ſacred weapon, left for truth's defence;
Sole dread of folly, vice, and inſolence!
To All but heaven-directed hands denied;
The Muſe may give Thee; but the Gods muſt guide.

Reverent I touch Thee; but with honeſt zeal;
To rouſe the watchmen of the publick weal;
To Virtue's work provoke the tardy hall;
And goad the prelate ſlumbering in his ſtall.
Ye tinſel inſects, whom a court maintains,
That counts your beauties only by your ſtains;
Spin all your cobwebs o'er the eye of day!
The Muſe's wing ſhall bruſh you all away!
All his Grace preaches; all his Lordſhip ſings;
All that makes ſaints of Queens, and Gods of Kings;
All, all but Truth drops dead-born from the preſs,
Like the laſt Gazette, or the laſt addreſs.

Epilogue to his Satires, v. 212.

Permit me to tranſcribe a paſſage from his Eſſay on Man. It is one of the

the innumerable inſtances which might be brought, of his penetrating, and maſterly underſtanding; of his intimate knowledge of the human heart, and mind.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Receives the lurking principle of death;
The young diſeaſe, that muſt ſubdue at length,
Grows with his growth, and ſtrengthens with his ſtrength:
So, caſt and mingled with his very frame,
The mind's diſeaſe, its KULING PASSION came;
Each vital humour which ſhould feed the whole,
Soon flows to this, in body and in ſoul:

Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
As the mind opens, and its functions ſpread,
Imagination plies her dangerous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part.
Nature its mother, Habit is its nurſe;
Wit, ſpirit, faculties, but make it worſe;
Reaſon itſelf but gives it edge and pow'r;
As Heaven's bleſſed beam turns vinegar more ſour.
We, wretched ſubjects though to lawful ſway,
In this weak queen, ſome favorite ſtill obey.
Ah! if ſhe lend not arms, as well as rules,
What can ſhe more than tell us we are fools?
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend,
A ſharp accuſer, but a helpleſs friend!

Eſſay on Man, Epiſtle II. v. 133.

My laſt quotation, to exemplify the genius of Pope, ſhall be his addreſs to

to Lord Bolingbroke, at the cloſe of his Eſſay on Man, which I have already mentioned. It is a bright, and glowing poetical texture of the eloquent, the polite, the philoſophical, the magnificent, and the ſublime.

Come then, my friend; my genius, come along;
Oh maſter of the poet, and the ſong!
And while the Muſe now ſtoops, or now aſcends,
To man's low paſſions, or their glorious ends;
Teach me, like Thee, in various Nature wiſe,
To fall with dignity, with temper riſe;
Formed by thy converſe, happily to ſteer
From grave to gay; from lively to ſevere;
Correct with ſpirit, elegant with eaſe;
Intent to reaſon, or polite to pleaſe.

Oh!

Oh! while along the ſtream of time thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all it's fame;
Say, ſhall *my* little bark attendant ſail;
Perſue the triumph, and partake the gale!
When Stateſmen, heroes, kings, in duſt repoſe,
Whoſe ſons ſhall bluſh their fathers were *thy* foes;
Shall then this verſe to future age pretend
Thou wert my guide, philoſopher, and friend?
That, urged by Thee, I turned the tuneful art
From ſounds to things; from fancy to the heart;
For wit's falſe mirrour held up Nature's light;
Showed erring pride whatever is, is right;
That reaſon, paſſion, anſwer one great aim,
That true ſelf-love, and ſocial are the ſame;

That

That virtue only makes our bliſs below;
And all our knowledge is, OURSELVES TO KNOW? *

If it ſhould ſeem ridiculous, at leaſt, inſignificant, to have requeſted the attention of the publick to a few rays amidſt a blaze of poetical ſplendour; to have dwelt, with admiration on two or three ſtars in the Galaxy; I have only to offer, in apology for this work of apparently critical ſupererogation, that

* Each word, in this peroration, is, as it is placed, and connected, the perfection of writing, except the word, *along*, at the end of the firſt line, which is feeble, and redundant. This trivial defect, from the ardour which the majeſtick opening of the paſſage, naturally produces in the imagination of the reader, has hitherto eſcaped obſervation.

the

the paſſages which I have cited, corroborate, in a certain degree, what I have written, in the vindication, and praiſe of our celebrated poet;—that FIFTY EXCELLENT LINES were never written but by one whoſe ſoul had been enriched, and harmonized by the Muſes;—and that the quotations from Pope, which I have inſerted in this Eſſay, could only have been produced by * A VERY GREAT GENIUS.

* I am afraid it is, at preſent too faſhionable to prefer a Sacchini to a Handel, and even a Maſon to a Pope. It is remarked by the ableſt political writers, that the prevalence of a childiſh, and prepoſterous taſte in the fine arts, after the golden reign of one that has been maſculine and noble, is one of the portentous preludes to the ruin of a ſtate.

I ſhall

I ſhall quote, and criticize an obſervation or two more made by Dr. Warton in the Treatiſe to which I refer, more fully to evince that this Gentleman is by no means qualified to cenſure, and undervalue one of our greateſt poets.

"To attempt to *underſtand* Poetry" (ſays he, page 167) "without having diligently digeſted Ariſtotle's "Poetics, would be as abſurd, and "impoſſible, as to pretend to a ſkill "in geometry without having ſtu-"died Euclid." This remark moſt palpably characterizes the cold, elaborate, and abſurd pedant. Ignorant, or artful ſophiſts are apt to ſupport a

favourite theory by making lively, but impertinent alluſions, by ſporting brilliant antitheſes, and by forcing into their ſervice arbitrary and unnatural analogies. Meretricious and contemptible tricks! which, however, confound, or ſeduce, and conquer ſuperficial minds. It ſeems to me as ridiculous to recommend any poetical object by a reference to Euclid, as it would be to demonſtrate the properties of ſcarlet, by an appeal to thoſe of the ſound of a cannon. The nature, and effects of geometry and poetry are totally heterogeneous, and incompatible; they are produced by applications eſſentially

tially different, of the ſenſes, and of thought. An Ariſtotle, and a Warton may retort a ſupercilious, magiſterial ſmile; but a Longinus, and a Harris may honour me with a look of animated approbation, when I aſſert that the geometrician and the poet form two different ſpecies in the human genus. The mind of the mere mathematician is frigid, and barren; deſtitute of paſſion, and imagination; he is endowed with perception enough to acknowledge a ſelf-evident, and meagre truth; with patience enough to follow a long ſeries of ſuch truths; with dry, and local memory enough to retain

that

that ſeries; and with reaſon enough to allow its indiſputable conſequence. The mind of the poet is ardent, and luxuriant; it pervades, with a rapid flight, the fertile, and exhauſtleſs regions of fancy; the images which it forms with emotion, with enthuſiaſm, inſpire thoſe who can adopt them with a flame congenial with its own. The objects of the poet are, the works of nature, as in their immediate effects, they impreſs the mind of man;—the various paſſions of the human breaſt;—our various relations, diſpoſitions, and characters, as we are affected by religion, government, ſolitude, and ſociety.

ſociety. With theſe objects mankind are daily converſant; and with theſe objects the poet addreſſes his readers, for their noble entertainment, and inſtruction, in matter, and language as perſpicuous as common ſenſe; with the intereſting advantages of a vigorous, and elegant ſtyle, of harmonious verſification; of deſcription, ſentiment, and ſublimity. In reading a true Poem, we need not inveſtigate the ſenſe of its Authour; but inveſtigation is the ſlow pace in which the mathematical ſtudent muſt always proceed. If a paſſage in a poet ſeems obſcure; if it puts the *underſtanding* on exertion;

either that paſſage muſt not be Poetry (for Poetry muſt be perſpicuous; its effects muſt be ſtriking, and inſtantaneous) or the ſoul of the reader muſt be torpid, and impaſſive; it muſt have been intended by nature for mathematicks. He who is endowed with good ſenſe, and ſentiment, who has had no regular education, but is converſant with the Engliſh language, and with the world, though he has never before opened a Poet, will receive great pleaſure from reading Pope's Eloïſa to Abelard, or even his Eſſay on Man. But would not *He*, or almoſt any other perſon, find the Elements

of Euclid, even after he had conquered many propoſitions, dry, difficult, and diſguſting? The ſenſible, and the unprejudiced will, without heſitation, anſwer in the affirmative. And why would He be thus differently affected by theſe two Authours?—Becauſe the genius of Pope is employed on thoſe objects which actuate our being; on thoſe objects in which we are deeply, and conſtantly intereſted; which debaſe, and dignify, which torment and delight us.—But the objects which are preſented to us by Euclid, are jejune, and ſevere; far diſtant from thoſe ideas which diverſify, and embelliſh

life; and only reached by a ſlow journey through an arduous, and dreary road. His principles, in the courſe of many ages, were partly diſcovered by chance, and partly multiplied, and improved by human induſtry. They are the foundations of an art merely intellectual; of gradual, and complicated ſcience.

I dare ſay Dr. Warton will allow that Homer, the oldeſt European poet, is the greateſt. Thus one man brought epic Poetry, the nobleſt province of the Muſe, to perfection, in a barbarous age, by the mere force, and exertion of his genius. But Homer could not have read Ariſtotle's

Ariſtotle's Poetics; for He lived long before that philoſopher. Nay we know that the epic rules in this poetical Code, without which, it ſeems, we cannot be qualified either to write, or to read Poetry, were fabricated from the plan, from the beautiful, and from the ſublime of Homer. Thus an ardent, a comprehenſive, a ſelf-taught genius, dictated, and circumſcribed the laws of the Stagyrite: the poet was not modelled by the critick, but the critick by the poet. And that the Poems of Homer were thoroughly felt, and admired before the days of Ariſtotle; that they have had the ſame general

influence in later times; and on many who never ſaw the Poetics of Ariſtotle; and that many excellent Poems have been written, whoſe Authours never looked into that work, I ſuppoſe Dr. Warton will not be hardy enough to deny. I might, in this paſſage, have adopted the Doctor's phraſe of *underſtanding Poetry*; had I not thought it only worthy of a *geometrical critick*; had I not thought that no torture of the Engliſh language could produce a more incoherent expreſſion.

From theſe arguments, the liberal reader, I hope, will infer, that geometry, and all the other ſciences are attained,

attained, but that Poetry is inſpired; that the poet owes his eſſential powers, and fame, to his own vigorous, rich, and extenſive genius; that this rare conſtitution of mind ſuperſedes all ſchools, and univerſities; that it cannot be produced by the ſun-ſhine, nor depreſſed by the rigour of fortune; that it may be conſiderably improved, and adorned; but, as it's characteriſticks are ſagacity, and fire, that it muſt not derive it's cultivation, and embelliſhment from cold, formal rules, and ſyſtems; from the great Ariſtotle, or from the little Warton; but from inſtructors nobler, and more deci-

ſive;—from a frequent attention to the works of nature; an attention ſometimes accurate, and minute, ſometimes enthuſiaſtick, and unbounded; from it's own ſufferings, and enjoyments; from an intimate acquaintance with the human mind; from a maſterly knowledge of polite literature; but, above all, from holding high converſe with the greateſt poets; by catching harmony from their numbers, taſte, and elegance from their deſcriptions; tenderneſs, and magnanimity from their ſentiments.

It is in the power of any man to be a good mathematician: for to ex-

cell in mathematicks, common ſenſe, cloſe application, and perſeverance are only requiſite. But men of capital talents, who have had all the advantages of education, whoſe minds are collected, and habituated to literary diſcipline, ſometimes miſtake their ſtrength, entertain poetical ambition without poetical genius, and after many ſtrenuous efforts, are never able to riſe above correct, and unaffecting mediocrity. While the great, but unfortunate few, whom nature inſpires, and on whom nature ſeems to have entailed calamity, conquer every oppoſition to excellence, and to fame; ſurmount the

languor

languor of ſickneſs, the preſſure of poverty, the polite inſolence of patronage; and

——————————— inform the page
With diction, muſick, ſentiment, and thought,
Never to die! ——— THOMSON.

It is not a little ſurprizing that great *Orators* have in vain attempted to be *Poets*. For when we ſurvey the mental properties of *Each*, They ſeem ſo nearly related, that if experience was not indiſputable, we ſhould ſuppoſe that They might eaſily coaleſce, and flouriſh in the ſame perſon. But I believe it will be

be found, in the Hiſtory of mankind, that They are

For ever ſeparate, though for ever near.

So inſcrutable are the natural principles, and the operations of the human mind.

" Pope (ſays Dr. Warton, p. 310.) " has added [to the original ſenti- " ments of Eloïſa] a very injudicious " thought;

The jealous God, when we profane his fires,
Thoſe reſtleſs paſſions in revenge inſpires—

" and again,

Love, free as air, at ſight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.—

" It

" It is improper for a perſon *in the* " *ſituation* of Elioïſa to mention " Cupid: Mythology is here out of " it's place."

Will the man who deliberately makes this remark, pretend that He is acquainted with Poetry, and paſſion? Was not Eloïſa ſtruggling between Duty, and Abelard who was dearer to Her than Duty; between Religion, and Love? And as She was well verſed in the Heathen Mythology, was it not natural, extremely natural, for one in *her ſituation*, to make incongruous tranſitions from venerable Saints to the gay Deities who preſided over pleaſure; from

the

the Crucifix to Cupid? Conſiſtently with the criticiſm I have now quoted, the Doctor might have gravely told us that a Nun ought not to have been in Love; and that ſo unnatural an object as Eloïſa was not a proper theme for the genius of a poet. Indeed, ſuch wretched cavil is too contemptible for animadverſion.

After having payed no artificial reſpect to an impertinent, and preſumptuous writer, who had the confidence to attack the ſacred reputation of Pope, I ſhall recommend his Book to learned and polite readers, for the merit which was annexed to

Perrault's

Perrault's Blaſphemies againſt Homer;—for the ſake of it's anecdotes, and quotations.

Of Mr. Pope I may venture to obſerve, that though his writings are not ſo ſtrongly, and boldly characterized with originality, and invention as thoſe of Shakeſpeare, and Milton, yet if we recollect that our miraculous Boy, at the age of fourteen, gave to Engliſh Poetry, a ſtrength, elegance, and harmony, which were unknown before; if we conſider how eloquent he is, and with what eaſe; how correct, and elegant, and with what ſpirit, and fire; we may pronounce Him as

rare

rare a phænomenon as either of thoſe two unrivalled poets.

It may be thought that I have too copiouſly anſwered ſome abſurd propoſitions: but I flatter myſelf that my anſwers are fraught with truths that will prove agreeable, and intereſting to liberal, and ſentimental minds. I have been thus explicit, and full, in refuting the dogmas of an academical chair; not from a falſe opinion of their importance; nor from an ungenerous contempt of ſcience, which produces uſeful, ſalutary, and noble effects; but from juſter, and more ingenuous motives: from a jealouſy for the glory of an

immortal

immortal poet; from my admiration of the divine art; and from an ardour to vindicate the laws of nature from the laws of Ariſtotle. *Taſte*, and *Reaſon*, even in *this* enlightened age, are perſecuted, and ſhackled, not by one or two, but by many criticks, who are very learned, but very poorly qualified to be the arbiters of *Either*. * The faſcination

* J'ouvre un livre moderne. Son impreſſion ſur moi eſt plus agréable que celle d'un ouvrage ancien. Je ne lis même le dernier qu'avec dégoût: n'importe; c'eſt l'ancien que je louerai de préference. Pourquoi? c'eſt que les Hommes, et leurs generations ſont les echos les uns des autres; c'eſt qu'on eſtime ſur parole juſqu à l'ouvrage qui nous ennuie.

L'envie,

ſcination of Greek and Latin is yet unbroken; and every impartial ſcholar deſerves encouragement from the Republick of Letters, who endeavours to diſſolve the ſpell. The bright, and genial rays of philoſophy have baniſhed religious gloom; but our literature is yet deformed with monaſtick prejudices. Hence the writer who is ſo injudicious; who is actuated by an ambition ſo erroneous as

L'envie, d'ailleurs, défend d'admirer un contemperain; et l'envie prononce, preſque toûjours, tous nos jugements. Pour humilier les vivants que d'eloges prodigués aux morts!

Helvetius:—De L'Homme.

to compoſe a * tedious Epic Poem, muſt model it from the plans of Homer, and Virgil; it muſt have it's

* The Epic Poems of Homer, and Virgil are excellently written: but they are as much admired from cuſtom, as from ſentiment. Whoever extends a Poem to a very great length, is, in that reſpect, injudicious: he is inattentive to the bounds by which Nature hath limited our powers of enjoyment. We cannot be warmly intereſted in all the diffuſion of a ſubject which is animated, and embelliſhed by the Muſe through many thouſand lines. Pleaſure in perſuing a ſubject thus elevated and adorned, is too high to be durable. The judgement of Poets, as of Thoſe who are converſant with the other fine arts, is, or ought to be improved, in a courſe of ages. Homer, and Virgil will always be univerſally, and attentively read: their glory is enſured by the ſanction of two, and three thouſand years. But whoever hereafter writes an Epick Poem, if He gains many readers at firſt, will not keep the number long.

Catalogue,

Catalogue, it's Epiſodes, it's Deſcent into Hell, in certain diſpoſitions, and of certain characters; or it muſt be deſtitute of Poetry. Our inſenſible dictators pay no regard to what paſſes in life; to what gives genuine pleaſure: They allow no play to the beautiful, and great expanſions of nature. Hence the double plot in the celebrated Tragedy of Cato is auſterely condemned; though the Love-plot preſerves the play from flatneſs, and brings no confuſion, nor obſcurity into it's Fable, or Dialogue. Hence the old, impertinent Chorus is obtruded on our ſtage by ſome little ſcholaſtick poets: and

hence Dr. Hurd, that modern ariſtarchus, without *his* fire, ſo childiſhly doats on his dramatic unities, that he prefers the Step-mother of Terence to his other Plays, and pronounces it exquiſitely beautiful: a Comedy, which, if it deſerves that name, was, with great juſtice, very languidly received by ancient Rome. It is evidently the worſt production of that elegant Authour; it's Fable is unintereſting; it's Characters are faintly diſtinguiſhed; and it is loaded with long, unnatural ſoliloquy. Such are the rules, and ſyſtems, inculcated by mechanical erudition, and echoed by imitative ſuperficiality.

An INVOCATION *to the* SHADE *of* POPE.

" AS there have been more im-
" probable Doctrines concerning
" the inviſible world, than to ſup-
" poſe that Thou, O amiable, il-
" luſtrious, and beatified Shade, art
" ſometimes a witneſs to the lan-
" guage of a ſolitary, but active,
" and ſentimental mind;—that Thou
" ſometimes whiſpereſt virtue, and
" happineſs to mortals;—deign to
" view this effort of my zeal for
" thy poetick fame (to which Thou
" art perhaps indifferent in thy pre-
" ſent ſtate) with a propitious eye.

" And

" And if, with thy intuitive penetra-
" tion, Thou ſeeſt my want of power
" to do Thee juſtice, accept the
" gratitude, and ardour of my will.

" Let me thank Thee for the con-
" ſolation, for the pleaſure, with
" which thy Muſe hath alleviated,
" and brightened, my fluctuating, and
" adverſe life. In my hours of poe-
" tical ſolitude (if, indeed, it is not
" puſillanimous to ſay that I was in
" ſolitude, while I converſed with *thy*
" moral, and mellifluous numbers)
" Thou haſt made me impaſſive to
" the gloom of external objects;
" Thou haſt made me independent
" of the gay companions of pro-
" ſperity,

" ſperity, and of the favour of the
" Great. While I caught ſtrong
" inſpiration from *Thee*, I have tri-
" umphed in my nature: I have
" felt, beyond a poſſibility of doubt,
" that I was ſuperiour to accident,
" and to matter; that I was born to
" exiſt, and to be happy, in a better
" world.

" May the benevolent, the plato-
" nick Virtue, who in *thy* ſtrains, is
" ſo eloquent, and attractive, win me
" to the conſtant love of *Her*, and
" teach me to moderate my inferiour
" paſſions. Thoſe obliquities, which,
" neither by my own endeavours,
" nor by thy influence, I ſhall be able

" to rectify, will be viewed, by
" Beings who are raiſed above all
" earthly ignorance, and envy, with
" an eye of generous compaſſion:
" and I hope they will be pardoned
" by OUR COMMON FATHER. May
" I never relinquiſh any good
" quality with which I am en-
" dowed! May I conquer the evils
" which yet await me;—may I re-
" tain my contempt of wealth, and
" grandeur, by the force, and ſplen-
" dour of poetical creation. For
" the colours of *thy* Muſe are more
" glorious than oriental luſtre; and
" as I know that I am above *low*
" *ambition, and the pride of Kings,*
" I would

" I would rather wiſh to poſſeſs *thy*
" abilities, than the power of a
" monarch.

" When the laſt hour of my
" exiſtence in *this* world approaches,
" may my parting ſoul be cheered
" with the celeſtial forms that
" charmed thy enraptured eye, and
" breathed ſerenity, and fragrance
" on thy evening-walks, along the
" banks of thy Thames, or in the
" groves of thy Windſor! May
" They bid langour ſmile, and
" ſmoothe the bed of death! For
" they have been my powerful auxi-
" liaries, when I was aſſailed by ob-
" jects more terrible than the grave.

"May they embolden me to antici-
"pate life eternal; to maintain a
"ſtrong, yet a humble hope, that
"I ſhall obtain that mercy, and
"happineſs, which were denied me
"in *this* unequal ſtate, from THE
"FIRST GOOD, FIRST PERFECT, AND
"FIRST FAIR!"

FINIS.